A HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE

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The Middle Ages and the Renascence
(650-1660)

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Translated from the French by
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Modern Times
(1660-1914)

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NEW EDITION REVISED AND RE-SET
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

literature of the English language, one of the literatures in original beauty, is the most extensive ever known to e world. Literary production in the past and the present, together, has attained to a greater mass in English than any other tongue, ancient or modern. Long though this ork be, it does not attempt to cover the whole field. It has itself to the English literature of the British Isles, aving to others both the literature of the United States and literature of the various British dominions, a vast subject ich is growing with prodigious rapidity. Only by forgoing picture of literary expression overseas has it been possible trace the history of English literature not too superficially, to show its development coherently and harmoniously, ause with unity of place.

This history was first written for the students of English o, year by year, are becoming more numerous in the universi- ies of France. Its appeal was also to all those Frenchmen who ave a curiosity regarding England and things English, who lesire to reduce the results of scattered reading to order, to grasp the dominating features of succeeding periods and follow the reflection in books of the development of a great people. The authors had not the ambition to reach the English public, which was, they already knew, richly provided with histories of literature, *both erudite and brilliant, ample or condensed, the* productions of one or of several minds.

The expectation of the authors was therefore exceeded when their work was so favourably received in Great Britain that its translation into English was deemed desirable. It may be that their enterprise was thus fortunate partly because of the character they intentionally gave it. *Their experience as university* professors had warned them that, if they were to prepare their

own students for knowledge of a foreign literature, they m take into account certain demands proper to the mentality of th nation: they must satisfy that need for connected compositi for the presentment of a chain of facts and ideas, without wh the French do not easily assimilate the matter they study. T unforeseen result of the method they therefore pursued was th the English critics found in their book a certain novelty; th considered that even in English it would not overlap with a other work, but would be attractive and useful. Moreov the authors' view of English literature is that of outsiders, wh are indeed fervent admirers of its strength and splendour, b yet have an independence of mind due to their foreign trainin to the fact that they have not inherited nor been nurtured this literature, but have approached it consciously and deliberate choice, as men rather than as children; and the judgments may in consequence have an added impartiality, the praise more weight. In these ways there is compensation f the inevitable inferiority of a foreign historian, his lack of t instinctive, almost innate love, which immediately affects t subconscious mind and may inspire the critic of his own nation work with some such moving, profound epithet as reveals t race. Duly conscious as they are of this original taint, t authors were the more pleased when they found their concepti of English literature to be far from unacceptable to Briti minds. The agreement seems to them proof that the frien effort they have made to penetrate the mysteries of an int lectual nationality, and to share it in so far as outsiders m has not been entirely in vain.

It is true that the generous reception accorded to this bo does not stand in isolation. French study of English literatu has had no more valuable encouragement than the benevol interest with which it has been followed in England during last half-century and especially during the last thirty years. is encouragement justly bestowed considering, merit apart, lack of prejudice and the fervour, even enthusiasm, with wh English is now studied in France.

Although the production of theses for the doctorate naturally hindered for a time by the war, those existing alre deal with all the various periods of English literature from beginning to the present day. Among those of which the

INTRODUCTION—PART II

MODERN TIMES (1660-1914)

The division of the book into two parts, the first dealing with origins, the Middle Ages and the Renascence, the second with the modern and contemporary periods, entails obvious differences of presentment and even of method. It would be vain to deny that they are partly due to the different habits of thought of the two authors. Yet even had the whole book been written by one man, he would have been led, almost inevitably, to pursue a different method in treating of the past and of the present.

To pass on from the study of mediæval and Renascence literature to that of modern times (1660–1914), is to meet with lighter difficulties in some respects, and heavier in others. So many conditions of the problem are new that the very nature of the task is no longer the same. The case here is not one of superabundant authorities, but of scattered and insufficient guidance. On many points, and more and more as one proceeds, the necessary spadework is still wanting. While the matter to be dealt with is really, within a shorter compass of time, much more plentiful, fewer attempts have been made to survey and clarify it. Even the division into periods is far from being agreed upon. It was therefore inevitable, if some sort of order was to be evolved, that much should be ventured, as much indeed remained to be done.

Under these circumstances, the author has been anxious to select the most efficient principle for a classification. Warned by the example of Taine—a critic of genius, steeped in the spirit of a dogmatic philosophy—he has not sought to deduce the course of English literature from any number of exterior influences. Such a scheme of rigorous determination is no longer conceivable. However, the day has come, it seems, when the broad facts of literary history can be more closely connected not merely with physical or social agents, but with a moral one—

namely, the development of the national mind itself. That a relation of this kind obtains always more or less, is admitted on all hands; but no explanatory ordering of the data could be thought of, so long as no definite elements were shown to reappear, in at least analogous forms, at the various stages of the psychological process. It is now possible to reckon with such elements, and to speak of recurrences in literature. The more searching analysis which has been effected of the movements in intellectual history, has brought out certain correspondences between equivalent terms. Those words, classicism, romanticism, and so forth, are seen to answer to distinct attitudes of the mind; and the transitions from one period to another show themselves as governed by a law of rhythmic change, the sway of which extends to most moral happenings.

From this point of view, it has proved possible to regard two centuries and a half of English literature as a succession of moments in the history of the English mind, each stage of which obeyed a craving for novelty and contrast, while consciously or unconsciously preserving the accumulated capital of all previous experiences. Such, in fact, is the normal development of that collective personality, a nation. That the national mind of England should have reached full growth at the time of the Renascence, made it easier to apply this method throughout the centuries of maturity that followed the age of Elizabeth.

The working out of this principle has allowed modern English literature to be presented in some sort of genetic order, and divided into periods, each of which really corresponds with a broad phase in the moral history of England; and with her social history as well, in so far as the facts of society and those of intellectual life offer a natural harmony. In consequence, not only has the field of literature been extended so as to include philosophy, theology, and the wider results of the sciences, whenever the expressions given them had awakened general interest; but the chapters within each period have been arranged so as to answer in principle, not the customary distinction between literary kinds, based on form, but the diverse aspects in the creative activities of writers, and thus the various psychological attitudes which these activities imply. The traditional separation between prose and poetry has therefore had very often to be ignored.

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A HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

BOOK I

ORIGINS (650-1350)

CHAPTER I

ANGLO-SAXON LITERATURE (650-1066)

1. *That Anglo-Saxon Literature Is Distinct from English Literature.*—Until recently the English looked upon Chaucer as the father of their poetry. They discovered the earliest source of their literature in that fourteenth century in which, on British soil, the fusion of the Anglo-Saxons and the Franco-Normans was consummated. To-day they trace their literary origins back to the seventh century. They give out that Cædmon and the unknown author of *Beowulf* were their first poets, and would go beyond these were it not that they lack older monuments. The stages and the motives of this recession in conquest of the past are curious.

From the time of the battle of Hastings in 1066 until the religious reformation of the sixteenth century, works prior to the Norman Conquest lay forgotten in cloisters where they were deciphered only by a few monks among whom knowledge of the former language was traditional. The dissolution of religious houses resulted in the loss of a large number of these documents, but, in compensation, it brought to light others to which a few scholars turned their attention. At first, especially for polemical reasons, they were concerned only with the religious and historical origins of the nation, or else with the characters of the language in which the documents were written, but gradually, after the charters and the books of devotion, old works of literature were explored, and some sort of collection of poets was made. The idea arose that a real national literature had flourished before the Norman invasion. There was, in the beginning, no thought of identifying it with English literature, properly so

called, and it was known as Saxon or Anglo-Saxon, words which marked it as separate and distinct. But during the last sixty years or so, the correctness of these very words has been disputed; they have been criticised as cutting what was an indivisible whole into two parts, and many scholars of the present day speak instead of old or primitive English literature. To the question "When does English literature begin?" they answer unhesitatingly that it begins with the first verse sung, the first line written in a Germanic tongue in the country now called England.

It may be that, unknown to themselves, this answer has been dictated as much by sentiment as by history. Until Germany had given evidence of her power in the world of intellect, England seems to have been at little pains to discover the expression of her national genius in the works which the Anglo-Saxons have left behind them. It was Germany, in her desire to prove her near kinship with the people who had produced Shakespeare and Milton, who made all the advances. Afterwards, the glory won by the Germans at the end of the eighteenth century in the fields of letters and philosophy, together with hostility to the France of Voltaire and Napoleon, inclined the English to strengthen those distant ties of intellectual kinship which bound them to the Germans, a new tendency first noticeable in the works of Coleridge, De Quincey and Carlyle. The political prosperity and growing military power of Germany ensued in the second half of the nineteenth century, and they had an influence which was decisive. It was at the very moment at which defeated France was submitting to the Treaty of Frankfort that German and English philologists began to suspect the legitimacy of the word Anglo-Saxon, and extended the word English to cover all the language spoken and all the literature written in Great Britain from the time of the Germanic invasion, thus implying that linguistic and literary progress had suffered no interruption important enough to make the use of distinct terms necessary.

This tendency met with an unconscious ally in democratic sentiment, then in vigorous and umbrageous growth, which made in England a rough distinction between two castes, the caste of the Franco-Normans which was the aristocracy, and that of the Saxons with which the whole remainder of the people were identified. Every loss of prestige to the former class, every doctrine which tended to give it an adventitious and foreign character, could not fail to please the majority.

At the same time the love, even infatuation, for the "gothic," with which Romanticism slowly infused all Europe, had exalted the most mutilated products of the Middle Ages at the expense of the so-called classical literatures, and had even gone so far as to surround the works of the barbarous ages with prestige. Works hitherto unknown or despised had been revealed as real treasures, glorious to appropriate. What Addison rather contemptuously called the "Gothic manner in writing" (*Spectator*, No. 70), had come to be admired by artists. It was a new enticement to the English to annex the most copious mediæval vernacular literature which had been preserved before those of Scandinavia or France.

Philology countenanced the annexation with its high authority. It placed beyond dispute the essentially German character of the English language. It proved, with the help of rediscovered texts, that the absorption into the old Germanic framework of foreign words, whether French or Latin, was progressive although considerable, that here and there the frames were perhaps strained or broken, but that they nevertheless subsisted. Philology, with its attentive lens, caught the slight successive modifications of speech, found nowhere a break in continuity, and concluded that there was a hidden unity behind the slow changes.

The transition from philology to literature seemed easy, and for many critics of the present day the distinction, formerly admitted, between Anglo-Saxon and English literature has ceased to exist. If terminology alone were in question, to waste time on assent or contradiction would be puerile. But the new doctrine obscures fundamental truths. For it is the property of the scientific study of languages to show that every seeming revolution in speech derives from an unnoticed gradual process. Philology succeeds unfailingly, where there is not a lack of texts, in proving that no sudden break exists anywhere in language. If supplied with texts, it will trace language back to Adam. But reflection shows that it would be as wrong, on this account, to give different names to Latin and the Romance languages, and to the literature of ancient Rome and the literatures of the nations now called Latin, as to Anglo-Saxon and English. Whither might not such a conception lead? To broaden meaning until all necessary distinctions are lost, is, in this instance, to forget that variations of language, however gradual, have finally such a cumulative effect that they render one age incomprehen-

sible to another, although the two be undeniably connected by a progressive linguistic evolution. However it may be with the English language, there is no other literature which has lived and developed in as much ignorance of its indigenous past as English literature. Italian and French were never quite weaned of their maternal Latin, but Anglo-Saxon literature, when the first great literary works of the fourteenth century appeared, was not only dead, but also unknown; its documents had been buried deep; they were written in a language which had become unintelligible, and could therefore exert no possible influence. The true unity of a literature is constituted by the persistence of a language which remains fairly intelligible from one age to another, and by the succeeding and more or less active influences, sometimes manifest and sometimes hidden, but none the less continuous, of the works which are literary landmarks. If this be so, Anglo-Saxon literature cannot be an integral part of English literature. It has rightly no other relation to English literature than the life of his father or mother has to the life of the hero of a biography.

It is the prologue rather than the first chapter of the book. Yet this prologue happens here to be indispensable. For if the Latin antecedents of Romance literatures are deposited in Latin literature, Anglo-Saxon literature is too slender and too special to have, at least for Frenchmen, its special place. Its most natural place is at the approach to English literature, its mere descendant, yet a descendant having certain derived characteristics and certain deep feelings which cannot be well understood until their germ has been descried in Anglo-Saxon works. Thus the right of Anglo-Saxon literature to open a history of English literature is again established, together with the justice of the term Anglo-Saxon.

2. *Anglo-Saxon Literature Is not a Direct Expression of the Pagan Age.*—The Anglo-Saxon literature which has reached us is, on the whole, the work of clerks who lived from the seventh to the eleventh century. If they did not create all of it, they preserved it all. It is therefore an essentially Christian literature. The editors allowed nothing to survive which seemed to them to conflict formally with their religion. Hence came a vast elimination of which we cannot even conjecture the importance. Hence also arose modifications and amplifications of such of the

old legends as were not sacrificed, changes which gave them an edifying turn certainly not theirs originally.

It is among these clerks that we must first place ourselves to understand not only the pages which emanated from them directly, but also the character and tone of the older fragments which they spared.

Let us go back to the end of the seventh century. The conquest had reached its term. Driven forward by the Huns, the Germanic tribes dwelling between the Elbe and the Oder and along the Danish coast, had invaded the eastern territory of Great Britain and held it for 200 years. The Angles were masters of the land north of the Humber, the Jutes of the land of Kent, and the Saxons of all the remaining country south of the Thames. Pagans at their arrival, these peoples had undergone mass conversion at the end of the sixth century, and the first dated writings appeared at the end of the seventh.

The oldest collections of laws show a civilisation which was already considerable and was permeated by the spirit of Christianity. The Anglo-Saxons were already a settled people, tillers of the soil, enjoying protection against theft and plunder, and an organised justice which deprived the individual of the right to vengeance and, as much as possible, substituted fines for corporal punishment. In each state a hierarchical society, in which centralisation and democratic institutions were happily balanced, had been established.

Nothing is therefore more illusory than to take the extant Anglo-Saxon literature for a primitive product, and to seek in it the reflection of Germanic barbarism. To blend the romantic picture Tacitus gives us of the first-century Germans with the picture of England in the eighth century is equivalent to placing on one plane the *Hymn of the Fratres Arvales* and the Æneid. In the pages of the Latin historian the remote germs of English political institutions or family customs may be discerned, but we must relegate to a dead past his descriptions of savages who went half-naked or clothed in the skins of wild animals, whose sole occupations were war and hunting, those nomads incapable of prolonged labour who lived in sordid huts and caves, whose indolence kept them cowering by their hearths for days together, who knew nothing of agriculture and despised it. There is no relevance in what Tacitus tells of the religion of these tribes, their

gods who corresponded to Mercury, Mars and Hercules, their cult of Ertha, the Earth Mother, the forests of their superstition in which their atrocious human sacrifices were consummated. These particulars are such as characterise any people not yet civilised. They are doubtless interesting to know, but they belong to conditions of an earlier society which linger only vaguely in the memory of the age of civilisation. Between the time of which Tacitus speaks and the period of the Venerable Bede, the Angles and Saxons underwent transformations compared to which all the revolutions of their later history, even the Norman Conquest, were trifling. They experienced migration and contact with a population of another race, the partially Romanised Celts, they relinquished a half-nomadic life for a life concentrated in fixed places, they exchanged war, misery and famine for a state of relative peace and prosperity, and finally they underwent a deep and fervent mass conversion to Christianity, which disorganised the system of morals while it reformed it, which brought the clerks into communion with Latinity, and which severed most bonds with the still pagan Teutonic world.

During these convulsions, nearly every possible survival of primitive poetry was uprooted, together with the mythology on which it rested. The mythology of which Tacitus speaks, the gods Tuisco and Mannus, can and even should be forgotten by whoever wishes to understand *Beowulf*. The names of the deities had ceased, when *Beowulf* was written, to have interest for anyone but a philologist, who might note the traces they had left in language, particularly in the names of the days of the week. The ancient rites had been totally submerged, save for some local practices or magic formulas or charms, which often had an alloy of Christian words, such survivals as folklore discovers to this day in the remote countrysides of Europe. Only traces of savage customs were to be observed, or such sporadic revivals of barbarism as the reigning code condemned. Everything derived from the barbaric past had been purified and ennobled, and also enervated, in an atmosphere of Christianity which already was almost one of chivalry.

It is no less dangerous to merge in a single whole Anglo-Saxon poetry and the poetry of the Scandinavians, or continental Germanic poetry where it was still pagan. The *Nibelungen-lieder*, although compiled at a later date, give, at least in the Hagen epic, a powerful picture of the warlike furies and the

atrocious vengeances of the earliest ages. Nothing like or approximating to them is to be found in the whole body of Anglo-Saxon verse. Scandinavia and Iceland preserved in the *Edda* and in their prose sagas abundant characteristics belon[illegible] beliefs and customs. In [illegible] [illegible] Saxon literature. In the [illegible] harmony between the fabulous, immense, strange subject-matter and the vehement style. In Anglo-Saxon poems the excessiveness for the themes of the traditional form, the disparity of dulcified subjects and verbal violence, is immediately striking. The *Edda* is full of allusions to a mythology of extravagant proportions, to legends which may not be preserved in their original integrity, but of which the spirit at least is kept, and seems, indeed, to be strengthened rather than softened The *Edda* presents, in abbreviated form, powerful dramatic pictures of fights between barbarous men, and of struggles between gods yet more barbarous and unbridled than the men. No wish to edify seems to have dominated or restrained the poet. At one time he gives full rein to his imagination, at another his realism is intense. He shows barbarism by turns in its acts and in its visions. But Anglo-Saxon poetry, taken as a whole, is a continuous piece of edification, elegiac in its dominant tone. It is a long Christian lamentation breathed by ingenuous and fervent men.

3. *The Anglo-Saxon Latinist Clerks: Aldhelm, Bede and Alcuin.*[1]—Before dealing with the Anglo-Saxon poetical texts which seem most ancient, it is necessary to recall the Christian Latinists, about whom alone we have precise data. To them and to those like them we owe the preservation of the traces of primitive poetry. They spoke the native language and often themselves wrote verses in the vernacular, and in their Latin writings customs are indicated and scenes are sketched which reveal the life of their times more clearly than does Anglo-Saxon poetry. Sometimes, moreover, through their Latin, the imaginative background of their race makes itself felt with singular force, so that the characteristics of the national literature can thus be better understood.

The migration of the Germanic peoples into Great Britain was still in process when Christianity was first introduced among them. As early as 597, the monk Augustine came from Rome to

[1] The works of Aldhelm, Bede and Alcuin are included in Migne's *Patrology*.

convert them and founded in Kent, where the Jutes had established themselves, the church of Canterbury.

At much the same time, Christian Ireland was sending missionaries to the Angles, and was building the monasteries which were the earliest civilising influences in Northumbria. From these two centres Christianity spread among the Saxons who were occupying the south and west of the island, that is from centres diverse as the mother-churches whence they sprang. Their differences led to a struggle for supremacy which lasted until, in 664, the Synod of Whitby gave Rome the victory over Ireland. The distinction between the two disciplines subsisted, however, for a much longer time, and two distinct spirits are revealed in Christian writings, according to whether they emanate from the north or from the south, and are apparent through the Latin which was the invariable medium of the clerks.

Aldhelm (650?-709) was a product of the school of Canterbury. He was the pupil there of Abbot Hadrian, an African monk, and of Theodore, the Greek monk of Tarsus. A Saxon of noble birth, Aldhelm is said to have been a successful poet in the vernacular, but only his Latin works are extant. As abbot of Malmesbury, and afterwards as bishop of Sherborne, he was at once a saintly prelate and a humanist. He was as conversant with the Latin poets of the classical and of later periods as with the Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers. He was a seventh-century stylist, an artist who was at once a Barbarian and a refined scholar. It is strange to find the expedients of Anglo-Saxon rhetoric intruding themselves into his Latin works, which abound, to an amusing degree, with alliterations and in which he indulges all his Anglo-Saxon taste for imagery and periphrasis. As a rule, he addresses himself to ladies, that is to nuns, and there is a curious coquetry in his discourses to them. It is the praises of virginity which he indites in prose, the praises of virgins in hexameters. His Latin is grammatically correct to a point which is rare at the end of the seventh century, but his origin is revealed by his too heavily decorated style, by his violent and numerous metaphors and by his habit of materialising the abstract. He alludes, for instance, to the golden necklace of the virtues, the white jewels of merit, the purple flowers of modesty, the swanlike whiteness of old age, and he speaks of "the opening of the gates of dumb silence," "the shining lamps of chastity in which the oil of modesty burns," "the unclean sink of impurity in which the

vessels of the soul are miserably engulfed," "the bastion of the Catholic faith shaken by the war-machines of secular arguments and overthrown by the battering-rams of atrocious ingenuity." These images are the very web and woof of his prose. The same characteristics reappear, with less startling effect, in his verse. His riddles, which have a place between the riddles of Symposius and the Anglo-Saxon riddles of which we shall speak later, are ingenious and sometimes graceful. In his taste for riddles, as in his passion for metaphors, the Latinist Aldhelm betrays his origin.

The great Latinist of Northumbria, the Venerable Bede, affords a striking contrast to Aldhelm. Whatever may be thought of his taste, Aldhelm was first of all an artist with whom manner has precedence over matter. But of Bede (672-735) the reverse is true. This Angle, who was brought up in Wearmouth Abbey, and spent his whole adult life in the monastery of Jarrow, was the most learned theologian and the best historian of Christianity of his time. He absorbed and he summed up in himself the culture of an age which had lost its inheritance on the Continent. The variety of his knowledge and his interests appears in the subjects of his principal works—a treatise on metre, a natural history, a universal chronology of the Christian era, based on serious astronomical studies, a martyrology, lives of the abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow, a life of Saint Cuthbert, above all, the *Ecclesiastical History of the Angles*.

The historical and biographical works are the most interesting for us. They are distinguished by an honest love of truth and by diligent documentary research. Bede's conceptions and style are impersonal, clear, simple, much above the level of his time. His pre-eminence is one of intelligence. He informs on points of fact and he interprets manners and customs. His *Ecclesiastical History* is still the chief authority for the early period of which it traces the history from a religious point of view, the years between Julius Cæsar's conquest and 731, that is, four years before the author's death. The conversion and the struggle between the Roman and the Irish Church and final triumph of the former, are its principal themes. Yet Bede, the historian and learned man, has been too exclusively praised. His extreme simplicity, which is in so great contrast to the artificiality of Aldhelm, and the weakness of his surviving Latin verses, have done harm to his literary reputation. In Bede, more than in any other Anglo-Saxon Latinist or any vernacular poet, the poetry, the charm and the

meaning of this age of early Christian fervour are to be found. The spirit of his lives of saints and abbots and his *Ecclesiastical History* is more intimate and penetrating than any which breathes in other works. His direct narration of facts, and the marvels of an artless faith in which he clothes them, are far more eloquent than all the effusions and the paraphrases of the poets. Moreover, Bede, like Aldhelm, was a student of vernacular verse of which his lucid reason enabled him to interpret the genius. The whole of the so-called Cædmonian epic could better be spared than those few bald pages in which Bede tells us how the poor peasant Cædmon received his inspiration. All the verses of Cynewulf taken together would be poor compensation for the ensuing scene, which has been quoted over and over again and can never be quoted too often. It occurs in the account of the conversion of Northumbria in 633. When Ædwin and his nobles had been asked to embrace Christianity, one noble spoke as follows:

"So, O king, does the present life of man on earth seem to me, in comparison with the time which is unknown to us, as though a sparrow flew swiftly through the hall, coming in by one door and going out by the other, and you, the while, sat at meat with your captains and liegemen, in wintry weather, with a fire burning in your midst and heating the room, the storm raging out of doors and driving snow and rain before it. For the time for which he is within, the bird is sheltered from the storm, but after this short while of calm he flies out again into the cold and is seen no more. Thus the life of man is visible for a moment, but we know not what comes before it or follows after it. If, then, this new doctrine brings something more of certainty, it deserves to be followed."

Nowhere else is there anything at once so exact and so ample. The image is as great as it is intimate, precise although mysterious. Shakespeare never produced one which was more striking or which better conveyed the feeling of life's strangeness. Nothing equal to it is to be found in the whole of Anglo-Saxon poetry.

It is true and characteristic, if a fact of undetermined importance, that Bede was the disciple of the Irish monks settled in Wearmouth and Jarrow. The pious simplicity of the way of life in these monasteries, a simplicity they created, remained dear to him. Although he rallied to allegiance to the Church of Rome, he never stifled regret for the pleasant days of his youth, and the Celts or Gaels who were his masters can hardly be denied an

important share in the training of his fine mind. To acknowledge this is to touch the insoluble problem of what influence the Celtic spirit secretly exercised on extant Anglo-Saxon poetry.

The illustrious Alcuin (730?-804), Charlemagne's collaborator from 790 onwards, also came out of Northumbria. He was brought up in York. Northumbria gave this great clerk to a France which had relapsed to barbarism. Alcuin left his country when the earliest civilisation of the Angles was about to be extinguished, for the terrible Danish invasions, which ruined monasteries and centres of learning, were beginning. Although as much of Alcuin's life as is historical was spent among the Franks, he stayed in his own country until he was sixty years old, and is therefore a representative, and a brilliant one, of the culture and the mentality of the Angles. His Latin poetry is less correct but more personal than Aldhelm's and sometimes has a fine ring. He finds moving distichs in which to bid farewell to his monastic cell before he leaves it for the court, and that cell, giving on to a blossoming orchard and green lawns, beside a stream, seems indeed to have been a place to regret. He sighs as he reflects that another will occupy it, that he will no longer be able to meditate verses in it, yet he recollects that all in this world is fleeting, that such is the common lot.

Many lines of his work are addressed to Charlemagne, whom he celebrates under the name of David, or compares to Homer, himself assuming the name of Flaccus (Horace). It is, however, his prose which is of special interest to us. Alcuin, writing prose, is an educationist who resumes all branches of knowledge in manuals. He treats grammar, rhetoric, dialectics and the rest in the form of dialogues or catechisms, having questions and answers. Sometimes the conversation is between a young Saxon and the young Frank whom he teaches, sometimes between Alcuin and Charlemagne himself, sometimes between Alcuin and his pupil Pepin, the emperor's son. Often the questions are very like riddles, a proof of the strong Anglo-Saxon taste for those ingenious exercises. The answers are nearly always periphrases or metaphors. There is no better introduction to an intelligent reading of Anglo-Saxon poetry than any extract from the dialogues in which the pupil is the questioner:

"What is the body? The spirit's lodging.
"What is hair? The clothing of the head.

"What is the beard? The distinction between the sexes, the mark of age.

"What are the eyes? The guides of the body, the vessels of light, the index to thought."

Sometimes fancy becomes rich and beautiful as well as curious.

"What is the sun? The splendour of the world, the beauty of the sky, the grace of nature, the honour of the day, the distributor of the hours.

"What is the sea? The path of boldness, the earth's bourne, the divider of regions, the receiver of streams, the spring of showers. . . ."

If the vulgar tongue be substituted for Latin, there is no difference in style between these didactic definitions and Anglo-Saxon poetry. Like Aldhelm, Alcuin carried into his Latin the turns of thought and the imaginative and slightly childish mentality of his fellow-countrymen. If the great clerks whom we have enumerated have left us no verses in the vernacular—such as they wrote have been almost all lost—they are yet hardly less representative of the Anglo-Saxon spirit than are the writers in the vulgar tongue. It was among these men, perhaps by them, surely by anonymous clerks like them, that the poems which have reached us were compiled or were, at least, edited and expurgated.

The characters of Roman writing seem to have been imported with Christianity, and to have taken the place of the runes, which the Germanic peoples engraved on monuments and used for brief correspondence, but in which they do not appear to have recorded the verses of their poets, the gleemen or scops. It follows that memories of the pagan epoch have invariably been transmitted to us through the medium of the clerks, and that what we call Anglo-Saxon literature has therefore been inevitably subject to the influence of Latin, and to no other foreign influence. It is a literature in which the direct and realistic expression of the national genius, unmodified by Christianity, is rarely found and dangerous to seek.

It is a literature compiled by clerks, but by clerks whose fathers were warriors and vikings, and who were very near the surviving memories of the warlike age. The word battle, the thought of prowess, awoke irrepressible ardours in them. It cost them little effort to call up the manners and the scenes of so recent a past. The terms of an unaltered language, the accents of unchanged prosody, the recurring combinations of words and images inevitable to alliteration: all these often took them back to the days of adventure by land and sea and led them to preserve

such fragments as oral tradition had handed down to them. Thus their poetry, even when it is entirely Christian, is full of reminiscences and echoes of paganism. Less dominated by Latin than their prose, it deforms and reforms Holy Writ, in accordance with its own traditions, even while it reproduces it. It thinks Scripture anew and interprets it in national terms. It crowns biblical warriors with the helmet and shields them with the lime-wood buckler, and sends the saints of the Mediterranean to voyage over grey and ice-cold seas, while the low, rainy sky of the north broods over Palestine, wolves roam the Holy Land, and crows and wild swans fly above it. Thus this poetry presents a continual contradiction, yet constantly, by changes of scenery and of actors, creates anew while it claims to translate, so that its very inaccuracies are alive and partly original.

Such is the general character of this literature, which, although fundamentally Christian, is here and there still pagan in feeling and everywhere national in form.

4. *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Its Manuscript Sources, its General Character.*[1]—The way in which the texts of Anglo-Saxon literature have reached us is significant. Leaving on one side documentary and practical works, whether historical or religious, and also the chronicles, texts of laws and homilies and the various translations, we find almost the whole exclusively poetical literature in four manuscripts attributed to the eleventh century. The first of these, the so-called *Junius* manuscript, named after the scholar, Milton's friend, who bequeathed it to the Bodleian Library, contains the paraphrases from the Bible known as the Cædmonian Poems. The second is the *Codex Exoniensis*, which was given to Exeter Cathedral by Bishop Leofric in the eleventh century and was almost forgotten until 1826. Its contents are a curious

[1] The Anglo-Saxon poems have all been collected by C W M Grein in his *Bibliothek der angelsachsischen Poesie*, 4 vols. (1857-64). The first two volumes contain the texts, the others a glossary. Revised by R. P Wülker in 1894 (Leipzig).

Among the very numerous studies of this poetry, we would cite, in addition to the general histories by Ten Brink, Courthope, Taine and Jusserand and the first volume of the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, Stopford Brooke's *History of Early English Literature to the Accession of King Alfred* (1892) and *English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest* (1898), two works which contain excellent translations into English verse; J. Earle's *Anglo-Saxon Literature* (1884), and W. P. Ker's *The Dark Ages* (1904) and *Epic and Romance* (1897); Emile Pons' *Le Thème et le sentiment de la nature dans la Poésie anglo-saxonne* (1925); and, for the language, the first volume of René Huchon's *Histoire de la Langue anglaise* (1923). Translations into alliterative verse in J. Duncan Spaeth's *Old English Poetry* (Princeton University Press, 1922).

medley of pious poems, of half-pagan lyrical and elegiac compositions, and of riddles and sententious verses. Thirdly, *Beowulf* and the biblical fragment *Judith*, unknown until the end of the eighteenth century, are strangely associated in the British Museum manuscript. And lastly, in the manuscript which was discovered in 1832 in the capitular library of Vercelli in North Italy, there are entirely religious poems and, especially, metrical lives of the saints. To these must be added two short fragments of verse from some still more recently recovered pages of parchment, the one on the battle of Finnesburh and the other on an episode of the life of Waldhere, otherwise Walter of Aquitaine, and also the important fragment, the *Death of Byrhtnoth* or *Battle of Maldon*, published in 1726 from a manuscript which is lost. Such is almost the whole of the known poetry of the Anglo-Saxons, and it is on these texts that the attempt must be based to establish the dominant features of this poetry, which is at once strongly characterised and very uniform.

At the time when the extant texts were compiled, its form was already fixed. This primitive metrical literature had been subject, before it assumed its present guise, to a process of ossification. The most ancient works are posterior to the date at which versification and rhetoric assumed definite shape, and every subject, whether Christian or pagan, epic or personal, great or small, whether the story of the Creation or a riddle on a rake, is clothed in the same dress. Literary decoration and the turn that is given to a theme are always identical. The singer's voice has unchanging volume. The effect on the senses and the imagination hardly varies.

1. The most profound and also the most general element in all poetry is to be sought in language. The qualities and deficiencies of a language predetermine the field of poetry and its successes and failures, almost independently of the personal genius of the poets who use it. The chief task of a poet is to take skilful advantage of the resources a language offers to him. Words have a particular expressive value which is outside or beyond their meaning, and although the force of association of ideas may supply a grace or an energy, a lucidity or a mystery other than that which belongs to a word at its simplest, the fact remains true that the maximum of suggestion is reached when sound and meaning are in harmony. Thus it might be said, of the essence of the

English language, that in its Teutonic elements it surpasses French by its vigorous strokes, but that it speaks with a less melodious voice. What the French weakly call *force*, has an English name, *strength*, from the Anglo-Saxon *strengthu*, in which seven muscular consonants strangle a single vowel, but in the French word *oiseau*, a solitary consonant hums among soft vowels and diphthongs, with such effect that it makes the English *bird* (A.S. *bridd*) seem to have little power of suggestion.

The primary character of the Anglo-Saxon language derives from the predominance of its consonants. Not only are syllables introduced by a consonant or group of consonants (*h, sc, sp, st, str, hr, thr*, etc.), but these consonants form the vital part of syllables. They are explosive, not quiescent, and their noise drowns the neighbouring vowels, a characteristic of which the persistence is proved whenever any French word passes through an English throat, as when *donne* becomes *ddonne* or *plaine*, *pplaine*. The value given to the initial consonant, together with the tonic accent, which throws the root syllable into relief, and with the emphasis on the essential word of a sentence, make up the law of Anglo-Saxon versification. The comparative insignificance of vowels is shown in the rule that vowel sounds, which may be substituted for alliterations or repetitions of initial consonants, need not be identical. For here it is not the sound of the vowel but the absence of the consonant which is important. The effect is produced by the momentary softening of the line.

The normal line is made up of an undetermined number of syllables divided into two sections, in each of which there should be two rhythmic accents. The recurrence of the same consonant or group of consonants, to introduce the two accentuated syllables of the first section, and that of the first accentuated syllable of the second section, give the alliteration, as follows:

> *st*eap *st*anlitho—*st*ige nearwe (*Beowulf*, II. line 159).
> *Steep stone slopes, paths narrow.*

There is often only one alliteration in the first section.

2. While the line is thus based on accent combined with alliteration, and while both of these depend on the predominating value of consonants, the style and the construction of the poetic phrase derive from another characteristic of the language.

Unlike modern English, which is one of the most analytical

and least inflected of languages, Anglo-Saxon expresses changes of tense, number and person either by modifications of the root vowels or by differences of termination. It is a language nearly as synthetic as Latin, endowed with four cases for either number, several declensions of the noun, two declensions of the adjective, and numerous conjugations of the verb. Its syntax, that of an inflected language, shows a very complex use of cases and great freedom in the arrangement of words. This freedom of construction is to-day one of the points in the old language which astonish an Englishman. Its effect in poetry is to cause the place of words to be strictly governed by the needs of the alliterative line or the exigencies of emphasis. There is an abundance of separate, disconnected words in apposition, with something of the effect of superimposed interjections.

It is impossible, even in the most literal translation into an analytical language like English or French, to reproduce the staccato of these phrases without either introducing connecting links or becoming unintelligible. There is in the original a greater abruptness, a more interrupted sequence than that of which modern syntax allows.

3. Probably, however, no potentiality of the language had more influence on the rhetoric of the Anglo-Saxon poets than the ease with which it allowed them to make composites. This primitive tongue is poor in the grammatical suffixes and prefixes which transfer a word from one class to another, which make an adjective of a noun or a noun of a verb, or make two nouns into a new one, their separate meanings being lost in the process. The constituent elements of derivatives and composite words often remain clearly discernible and keep their distinct sense. Thus to crucify is to fasten to the cross, *rod-fæstnen*; a butcher is a slaughterer of cattle, *hrith-heawere*; the third finger is the ring finger, *hring-finger*; a literate man is one learned in letters, *stæf-cræftig*. The passage from words in current use and employed in prose to the words which poets invent for a particular effect is unmarked, so that it is often difficult to determine which terms are strictly poetic. Alfred's prose gives us *æfter-genga*, or after-comer, for successor; *ærend-gewrit*, or written message, for letter; *cynestol*, or king's seat, for throne; all words much like those composites which are found only among the poets—for instance, *eard-stapa*, or earth-walker, for traveller; *breost-nett*, or breast-net,

for corselet; *death-reced*, or death-chamber, for grave; *ban-hring*, or bone ring, for vertebra.

From language this process passed to thinking. Even when they were writing Latin, the Anglo-Saxons developed their ideas by means of accumulated periphrases. Their poets make an extensive use of this possibility of the language, and the peculiarity of their composite words is that they are used not of necessity, for lack of a simple equivalent, but as ornaments, to show a quality of the subject-matter and throw it into relief, or, *more frequently, for pure love of periphrasis, or again, for the* sake of alliteration. The body becomes the bone-chamber; the heart, the treasure-chamber; thought, the treasure of the breast; the breast, the close of the heart; the warrior is the man with the corselet, the lance-bearer or the swordsman; the sailor is the traveller on the waters; armour, the warrior's garb or the shirt of battle; and man, the earth's inhabitant or the word-carrier.

Many primitive customs and beliefs are revealed by these poetic synonyms. The chief or king is the *beag*-giver—*beags* being rings which served at once as ornaments and as money—or he is the gold or treasure giver; the banqueting hall is the mead or wine hall, or else the roofed hall; and warriors are lime-bearers, that is, bearers of limewood shields.

Numerous composite words bear witness to the Anglo-Saxon *enthusiasm for war:* battle is the game of blades, the conflict of lances or the cracking of banners, and the sword is battle lightning, while blood is the sweat of war or the flow of carnage.

The elements and natural phenomena supply as many composite terms as war. The sea is the path of sails, the whale's road or the swan's pathway; the flood is the waves' journey; fog, the helmet of the air; and darkness, the helmet of night.

These composites are sometimes heaped upon a simple word, like heavy, barbaric jewellery. Cædmon has quite thirty synonyms to denote Noah's Ark. The more of them a poet collects, the more pleased he seems to be, and the poems often so closely recall the Litany to the Virgin—"*Mystical Rose, Tower of David*, Tower of Ivory, House of Gold, Ark of the Covenant, Gate of Heaven, Morning Star"—as almost to suggest an attribution of this prayer to an Anglo-Saxon clerk.

A poet will not say "when night came," but "when the noble gleam its setting sought, darkened the northern firmament, dusk

amid clouds, o'erveil'd the world with mist, with darkness cover'd, when night clos'd over the cultured land's adornments." [1]

Often an object is designated only by composite words or periphrases, and its identity must therefore be guessed. Thus the eyes must be understood by "jewels of the head," the body by "fleshy clothing," armour by "the eorl's raiment." It was a sport of the poets to cause an object to be divined by one of its attributes, an amusement known as "kenning" which led to the riddle, so that collections of riddles are naturally among the most interesting of these poetical productions.

Almost the whole rhetoric of the Anglo-Saxons is made up of such perpetual periphrases. These poets abound in abrupt metaphors, condensed in single composite words, but they hardly ever make the consecutive and extensive comparisons which are born both of imagination and of reason. Only the artist who is master of himself and at peace can note the resemblances of different objects and study them side by side. He rarely does it if he feel passion, never if he be without culture. It would be hard to find in Anglo-Saxon poetry a metaphor which is not swift and violent, or of which the lines are amplified or merged in a harmonious picture.

The character of the language, of the metres and of the style is so marked that there is among all the poems a likeness which does not escape monotony. These poets modulate their voices very slightly and lack the alternatives of solemnity and lightness. Their joy weighs as heavy as their sorrow, their irony is brutal as a blow from a sledge-hammer. The traditional form and the single line give an air of grandeur to particular poems, but imprison and restrict individual initiative. Throughout the three centuries for which Anglo-Saxon literature is known, hardly an approach can be perceived to that differentiation of genres which is the sign of vitality and progress. The epic unity of form and tone is at first impressive, but its continued tension grows wearisome, and the periphrastic accompaniment enriches but overweights and obscures the style. None the less, this is a strong and an impressive poetic form. It remains to examine the value of the themes which it clothes.

5. *The Poems which Refer to the Pre-Christian Epoch: "Widsith," "Deor," "Beowulf."*—The Anglo-Saxon poems in

[1] B. Thorpe's translation of the *Legend of St. Guthlac*, line 1212.

which the traditions of the pagan epoch have been preserved are both the most beautiful in themselves and the most interesting to us. It has been seen that we cannot expect ever to find in them a direct picture of pre-Christian times, since they were compiled or edited some time between the eighth and tenth centuries by clerks who knew Latin, whose minds were coloured by Christian morality, and who had access to some models from Græco-Roman literature. Yet the authors of these poems had kept the old passion for adventure, together with the memory of the wild life of their ancestors and the ancestral legends and verses. There is a certain analogy between their state of mind and that which the nineteenth century called Romanticism. From a distance, through the medium of their purified feelings, they caressed with their melancholy their dream of the past. They were civilised men who returned to barbarism in spirit and impregnated it with their moral sense. They were a little like Virgil nobly retracing the history of Rome's infancy, or Tennyson expurgating the perverse Arthurian legend. They often recast the poems which a tradition, doubtless oral, had handed down to them, suppressing whatever shocked their consciences, and intercalating new passages or adding edifying conclusions.

The short poems *Widsith*[1] and *Deor* lift a corner of the veil which hides the past. They purport to be the songs of two scops or poets living on the Continent in an age already fabulous. Widsith or "Great Traveller" has wandered much from tribe to tribe, and he gives a list of the princes who have made him presents. Among these are Eormenric, King of the Goths, Attila, King of the Huns, and Albouin, King of the Lombards, whose date is more than two centuries later than Attila's, the second third of the sixth century instead of the middle of the fourth, so that Widsith is plainly no historical figure but a typical scop who is an excuse for bringing together names famous in history and legend. The enumeration of Germanic tribes is valuable to historical geography, and the literary attraction consists almost entirely in the lustre of the proper names and their suggestions. Both Hrothgar, who recurs in *Beowulf*, and Hagen, celebrated in the *Nibelungenlieder*, figure in *Widsith*. The poem gives an idea of the wandering minstrels who went from court to court, singing

[1] R. W. Chambers, *Widsith, a Study in Old English Medieval Legend*, Cambridge, 1912.

the praises of the princes from whom they received or expected largesse. It concludes as follows:

Thus the gleemen
Say in song their need, speak aloud their thankword!
Always South or Northward someone they encounter,
Who,—for he is learned in lays, lavish in his giving—
Would before his men of might magnify his sway,
Manifest his earlship.
Till all flits away—
Life and light together—land who getteth so
Hath beneath the heaven high established power.[1]

The *Lament of Deor* is the effusion of a more sedentary and less happy scop than Widsith, one disgraced by his lord who has preferred his rival, but consoled for his ill luck by recollection of the normal inconstancy of fortune. He recalls heroes and gods who were not spared tribulations, and concludes every strophe—this is the only Anglo-Saxon poem which has this strophic form—with a sort of refrain:

That he overwent; *this* also may I.[2]

But the only poem which attempts a picture of the primitive age on a large scale is the *Lay of Beowulf*.[3] The date of the compilation of this work makes it the most ancient epic of the Teutonic world, and historically its subject takes us back to the first half of the sixth century. It speaks of the victory of the Franks over the Goths led by Hygelac (the Cochilaicus of Gregory of Tours), which occurred about 512-520, a fight in which the young warrior Beowulf, one of the defeated army, is said to have distinguished himself by strength and valour.

Neither the subject nor the characters are in any way peculiarly Anglo-Saxon. Not only is there no question of the island of Great Britain, where the Anglo-Saxons were established as early as the fifth century, but there is also no mention of the lands near the Elbe which they inhabited previously. The scene is, by turns, the Danish island Seeland and the country of the *Geats* or Goths in the south of present Sweden, and Beowulf, the

[1] Stopford Brooke's translation.
[2] Stopford Brooke's translation.
[3] Edited by F. Klaeber, Heath, Boston, 1922. Translations into modern English have been published by J. Earle (Oxford, 1892), J. M. Garnett (verse translation, 1883), W. Morris and A. J. Wyatt (Boston, 1898). See R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf, An Introduction to the Study of the Poem*, Cambridge, 1921.

hero, is a Geat. This is thus no national epic; even if the common origin of the tribes be taken into account, it is remarkable that almost at the moment at which an unknown Anglo-Saxon poet was commemorating his forebears of Scandinavia, the still pagan people of that country were beginning their redoubtable descents upon the shores of Great Britain, visiting upon the Anglo-Saxons the very ills which these had once inflicted on the Britons. The question arises, therefore, whether *Beowulf* be not an adaptation into Anglo-Saxon of a Scandinavian legend, a hypothesis supported by the fact that the chief incidents of the story of Beowulf, the slayer of monsters, recur in the Icelandic saga *Grettir.* It is, however, plain to anyone who has read the prose and metrical sagas of the north, that *Beowulf* has a markedly different tone and turn of narrative from these works, that in it their wildness has been tamed, and that it has a predominating moral tendency, and lacks the violent strangeness of Norse literature. On the other hand, by feeling and imagination, as well as by language, *Beowulf* comes very near the rest of the extant Anglo-Saxon poems. It is, in fact, a mixed and slightly artificial production, which has a foreign basis but is national in form.

The constituent elements of the poem are likewise a medley Certain episodes and, above all, a sustained noble gravity of tone, would make *Beowulf* an historical poem, but the incidents of the plot are romantic and supernatural. It is like an Iliad which should have Hercules instead of Achilles for hero, his triumphs over monsters for theme, and about whom purely historical beings and scenes should form a frame for the story. There is a striking incongruity between the realism of some pictures—the descriptions of banquets and still pagan funeral rites—and the obstinate idealism which gradually turns the strong-armed fighter into a sort of saint, and depicts a king's court in which nothing is heard but noble sentiments and counsels of modesty and wisdom. The later chivalrous and adventurous romances are foreshadowed in *Beowulf*, although the poet never abandons the noble epic tone and seems to feel it beneath him to minister to mere curiosity.

Every incongruity which analysis can discover disappears in the movement and the style of the poem. In spite of grave structural faults, the use not of one but of three successive stories, in spite of a monotonous and slightly childish theme, the work is that of an artist. Its sustained dignity and regular, rather restricted

march is such that some critics, comparing it with the poems of Scandinavia, have been impelled to see in it the influence of classical antiquity.[1]

Beowulf, with some valiant Geats, comes to the help of Hrothgar, king of the Danes, whose palace of Heorot is wasted by the nightly attacks of Grendel, a monster of the race of the *eotens*, or giant ogres, the issue of Cain. Every night Grendel emerges from his lair in the marshes beneath the cliffs, in order to seize and devour one of the king's companions. In a terrible hand-to-hand struggle, Beowulf tears off an arm of this monster, who is mortally wounded and flees to his den to die, whereupon all is joy in victory and deliverance.

But Grendel's mother avenges her son. She renews the attacks on Heorot, and Beowulf resolves to go forth to fight her in her home. Diving after her into the waters of a sinister lake, he meets her in combat in the cave in which she dwells beneath the waters. When he is all but worsted he seizes a magic sword which hangs on the wall, and plunges it in the body of the fearful beast, and then, when the Danes believe that he has already fallen a victim to his daring, he returns to Heorot in triumph, bearing Grendel's gigantic head.

He becomes king of the Geats and reigns over them gloriously for fifty years. But some jewels are stolen from an ancient treasure guarded by a dragon, who thereupon sets out in fury to devastate the king's realm, burning with his flaming and pestilential breath all that lies in his path. Beowulf slays the dragon and saves his people, but he is himself mortally wounded during the encounter by the monster's venomous tooth, and he dies nobly, consoled by the thought that he has sacrificed himself for his subjects, and that he is bequeathing to them the incomparable treasure which has been in the dragon's keeping. He has, however, been forsaken during the fight by all his thegns but one, and great evils are prophesied for the Geats bereft of their king.

It is seen that the labours of Beowulf are far from attaining to the ingenious variety of those of Hercules. All the monsters he meets in combat are equally fearful and vague; the horror is produced by their mysterious outline, the night which surrounds them and the sinister places they inhabit. The description of

[1] See *Greek Parallels to Certain Features of the Beowulf*, by A. S. Cook. Philological Quarterly, Vol. 5, No. 3.

the marshes in which Grendel's mother dwells is perhaps the most famous passage in the poem. A sombre imagination and the sadness of a northern landscape have united to paint this powerful picture. But the sadness is not confined to the references to nature. It is diffused throughout the poem, never absent from it. It recurs in elegiac form in the episode of the origin of the treasure, which was buried by the last survivor of a proud family, and came into the dragon's possession. Even in the intoxication of fierce battle and of the hero's victory, sadness is perceptible. There are constant allusions to the nothingness of life, of courage and of glory, and although Beowulf is in every point a hero, the ideal of an active force serving good and triumphing over evil, the poem does not convey that effect of fortifying energy which might be expected of it. This poem which is a glorification of bold enterprise leaves a bitter taste, or at least an impression of universal melancholy. It makes life seem sad, effort vain. The reason for this must be sought in its atmosphere. It takes one into a dark place whither the sun's clear light does not penetrate, where fogs and unwholesome vapours are never quite dissipated by the sun's rays. A certain joy in life is needed to make a work of imagination healthy, but Beowulf, or rather the poet who narrates his adventures, has introduced the Christian idea of earthly life among his gloomy scenery, has plumbed the emptiness of mortality, and found it of little worth at the very moment at which he celebrates mortal glory. This is indeed a poem which has come out of a cold cell in a Northumbrian cloister. It breathes the air of the tomb.

6. *Lyrical and Elegiac Poems*:[1] *the "Ruined Burg," the "Lover's Message," the "Maiden's Complaint," "The Wanderer," "The Seafarer."*—The melancholy which weighs upon *Beowulf*, especially on its latter part, often recurs in several undated short poems, which are distinguished from those already mentioned by a complete severance of ties with the Continent and a break with pagan tradition. All the same, these poems are not distinctively Christian; rather they are Christian only in some of their details and in their conclusion. They are laments, usually desolate. Their voice is something like that heard in the so-called "Songs of Ossian," with which Macpherson conquered Europe at a moment in the eighteenth century when men were avid of the vague and the melancholy. These Anglo-Saxon verses strike,

[1] E. Sieper, *Die altenglische Elegie*, 1915.

perhaps more truly than the authentic fragments of Celtic poetry, that note of lamentation, at once personal and human, to which the name of Ossianic has since been given.

There is, for instance, a complaint written on the ruins of an old town which might be Bath, the watering-place which was so magnificent in Roman times, before the Saxon invaders destroyed it. A poet comes to visit the remains of this splendid town, long after the days of its splendour, and is grieved by the sight of the "ruined burg."

> Many were the mead-halls, full of mirth of men,
> Till the strong-willed Wyrd whirled that all to change.[1]

The poem is a series of monotonous laments in which the word ruin recurs incessantly like an inevitable refrain.

There is also a series of lyrical poems, or rather elegies, which are more intimate and have reached us in the guise of personal effusions, but which are so obscure that the question has arisen whether they be not detached parts of longer romantic compositions. The habitual melancholy is missing only in one of them, the *Lover's Message*, in which an exile sends a message to his love by means of runes carved on a wooden tablet. By a fiction in harmony with the enigmatic style affected by this poetry, the wood itself is made to speak, to relate its origin in a forest and its voyage on a ship, and to marvel that man has been able to give it a tongue. This wood is employed by the lover to ask the maiden to join him in his place of exile where he has become powerful and prosperous and will surely make her happy.

> Soon as ever thou shalt listen on the edges of the cliff
> To the cuckoo in the copse-wood chanting of his sorrow,
> Then begin to seek the sea, where the sea-mew is at home.[1]

More obscure, but richer in feeling, is the elegy which might be called the *Wife's* or *Maiden's Complaint*, were it certainly the utterance of a slandered woman who laments that she is banished from the neighbourhood of her love. Equally well, however, it may be the complaint of a young thegn kept from joining his dear and exiled lord. The singer's suffering is caused by her faithfulness. She has been condemned to dwell in a cave "in a grove amid this wood," and thence, "in the early dawning" she comes

[1] Stopford Brooke's translation.

alone to spend a whole summer day mourning her griefs beneath the shelter of an oak. She dreams of her beloved, who also is [illegible] assume an air [illegible]e o'erhanging [illegible], overfrosted by the storm," where he endures

> Anguish mickle of the mind, far too oft remembers him
> Of a happier home![1]

The elegy *The Wanderer*, of fuller scope, is certainly a song of friendship. A young thegn has been obliged, after the death of his beloved lord, to seek another protector beyond the seas. His dreams on the path which leads to exile are sad.

> And it seemeth to him in spirit, that he seeth his man-lord,
> Clippeth him and kisseth him, on his knee he layeth
> Hands and head alike, as when he from hour to hour,
> Erewhile, in the older days, did enjoy the gift-stool.
> Then the friendless man forthwith doth awaken,
> And he sees before him only fallow waves,
> And sea-birds a-bathing, broadening out their plumes;
> Falling sleet and snow sifted through with hail—
> Then the wounds of heart all the heavier are.[1]

As, however, he considers that vicissitudes of fortune overtake even chiefs and that misery is common to all men, he understands that his grief is but a part of the universal order of change:

> Doom of weirds is changing all the world below the skies.[1]

He is like the old warrior who fights over again the battles of his younger days and cries out with Ossian:

> Whither went the horse, whither went the man? Whither went the Treasure-giver?
> What befel the seats of feasting? Whither fled the joys in hall?[1]

The Seafarer, the most original of the Anglo-Saxon lyrical poems, may be taken as representative of this poetry, with its defects and qualities. Its capital defect is its obscurity, which reaches an extreme point, and is such that the subject of the poem has been interpreted in many ways. Is it a composition of a regulation type, in which the irresistible attraction of the sea for a seafaring man, well though he knows its evils and dangers, leads to the thought that as the sailor despises well-being on dry land, so man ought to reject earthly pleasures for the happiness which

[1] Stopford Brooke's translation.

awaits him beyond death? Or is it a poem which has been inspired from two distinct sources, a description of a seaman's rough life to which a pious Christian conclusion has been added?

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Such ambiguity is enough to prove that this short poem is imperfect in form. It is striking, none the less, by the sombre and violent picture it gives of northern seas in which suffering from cold mingles with the pains of water and wind. The extreme redundancy at least has as nucleus a powerful and realistic impression. Even though the ending is blurred and lost among pious effusions, the opening lines are full of energy:

With a bitter breast-care I have been abiding:
Many seats of sorrow in my ship have known!
Frightful was the whirl of waves when it was my part
Narrow watch at night to keep on my vessel's prow
When it rushed the rocks along. By the rigid cold
Fast my feet were pinched, fettered by the frost,
By the chains of cold. Care was sighing then
Hot my heart around; hunger rent to shreds within
Courage in me, me sea-wearied! This the man knows not,
He to whom it happens happiest on earth,
How I, carked with care, in the ice-cold sea,
Overwent the winter on my wander-ways,
All forlorn of happiness, all bereft of loving kinsmen,
Hung about with icicles; flew the hail in showers.
Nothing heard I there save the howling of the sea,
And the ice-chilled billow, 'whiles the crying of the swan!
All the glee I got me was the gannet's scream,
And the swoughing of the seal, 'stead of mirth of men;
'Stead of the mead-drinking, moaning of the sea-mew.[1]

Swiftly these memories are obliterated. The sailor soon wearies of the facile pleasures of towns. Spring brings back to his heart the passion for adventure:

Trees rebloom with blossoms, burghs are fair again,
Winsome are the wide plains, and the world is gay—

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All doth only challenge the impassioned heart
Of his courage to the voyage, whosoever thus bethinks him
O'er the ocean billows, far away to go.

And here the poet finds a strange and beautiful image to express this lure:

For behold, my thought hovers now above my heart;
O'er the surging flood of sea now my spirit flies,
O'er the homeland of the whale—hovers then afar
O'er the folding of the earth! Now again it flies to me,
Full of yearning, greedy! Yells that lonely flier;
Whets upon the whale-way irresistibly my heart;
O'er the storming of the seas.[1]

If it be impossible to follow all the truncated argument of *The Seafarer*, at least, through its mists, a powerful vision of polar seas and the fascination of their perils can be discerned. And this is something which persists in literature. This very passion for the sea and for adventure recurs in some great modern English poets—Byron, Swinburne and Kipling—whether or not they have known the old Anglo-Saxon song.[2]

7. *The Songs of War: "Brunanburh," the "Battle of Maldon."*[3]—As might be expected, it was in their war songs that the Anglo-Saxons best retained the vestiges of their wild, primitive mood, especially in those which celebrated their own battles. This fact is independent of chronology. Nothing perhaps reflects their past better than the sort of ode which is inserted in the prose chronicles, compiled by some monk, to glorify the great victory which Athelstan, King of Wessex and Mercia, and his brother, Edward, won at Brunanburh in 937 over the Scots under Constantine and the Northmen whom Anlaf led out of Ireland. The fierce enthusiasm of victory breaks out in savage irony addressed to the slain or fleeing invaders. The swiftness, even lucidity, of the ode allows the hypothesis that it was one of those popular *cantilenas* which are known to have flourished among the Anglo-Saxons. While the narrative and elegiac poetry is often so obscure that we can hardly believe it to have been meant for the people and understood by them, we have here a song

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[2] Donady, *La mer et les poètes anglais* (1912).
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which it is easy to imagine intoned, and caught up by all the soldiers of the victorious army. The fact that it contains no original detail, that all its circumstances are general, and that it ends with the oldest of Anglo-Saxon commonplaces on slaughter, strengthens the impression that this is a work which connects with a long tradition of songs of war. The story, which in the epic fragments is continuous, is here cut up into a series of short, irregular stanzas. We can imagine it sung to the accompaniment of the harp.

The history of the battle is resumed in a sequence of short, enthusiastic stanzas, in which, in turn, the West Saxons and the Mercians are extolled, the Scots and the Northmen held up to ignominy. The poet's massive irony expends itself on Constantine who came to attack Athelstan after he had sworn fealty to him:

> To his home in the North, Constantinus.
> The hoar war-hero was unable to boast
> Of attendance of men; he was robbed of his kinsmen,
> Bereaved of his friends on the battle-field,
> Conquered in fight, and he left his son
> On the place of slaughter, wasted with wounds,
> The boy in the battle. He durst not boast,
> The grey-haired warrior, of the clash of swords,
> The aged enemy . . .[1]

And the poem ends with the customary description of the field covered with the dead:

> Behind them they let the corpses share
> The dark-feathered fowl, the raven black,
> The crooked-beaked, and the ashy-feathered,
> White-tailed eagle enjoy the prey,
> The greedy war-hawk, and the grey-clad beast,
> The wolf in the wood.[1]

Some sixty years after the ode on the victory of Brunanburh, an unknown poet told the story of a national defeat, that of Maldon, in which, in 993, Byrhtnoth, the old chief of the East Saxons, met his death, as he strove to drive back a band of Northmen whose ships were coming up the Penta, a little to the north of the Thames. We have only a fragment of 325 lines of this poem, which seems, since it does not name a single one of the enemy, to have been written soon after the fight. It is not a lyrical song, but a detailed epic narrative which, by its rhythm and its general

[1] Translation by J. M. Garnett.

shape, recalls the battles of the Iliad more than does any other Anglo-Saxon poem. In spite of the extreme simplicity and the wholly national character of the poem, it provokes the question whether it be modelled on the classical epics. That poetry native to the country should, by mere chance, have attained to such a likeness to the classics seems incredible, and the surmise of imitation is tenable, since all Anglo-Saxon literature had been impregnated with Latin by the time this poem was written. But it must also be admitted that the copy, if such it be, is a very general one, and is drawn from a distance. The *Battle of Maldon* is no paraphrase of an ancient model. Its historical subject is local and quite recent. It is, in fact, the only extant fragment of a national epic in Anglo-Saxon.

The Saxons are Christians, repelling pagans, but all the noble sentiments in the poem refer to martial valour, love of battle, a leader's sacrifice of himself for his men, the loyalty of soldiers to their leader. Already the chivalrous point of honour is much to the fore. Out of his eagerness for battle, Byrhtnoth allows the Northmen to pass over the Penta in order that the fight may engage. When the Saxon chief is wounded to death, he rejoices and breaks into laughter, and he dies thanking God that he has been suffered to strike great blows before his end, and that many joys have been vouchsafed to him on earth. His death is the signal for the flight of the cowards, led by the traitor Godrich, but it redoubles the ardour of the brave to avenge their fallen chief, and they die about his body. Their heroism is summed up in words spoken by the old chief, Byrhtwold, as he brandishes his ashwood lance:

The braver shall thought be, the bolder the heart,
The more the mood, as lessens our might.
Here lieth our lord, all hewn to pieces,
The good on the ground: ever may grieve
Who now from this war-play thinketh to wend.
I am old in years: hence will I not,
But here beside mine own dear lord,
So loved a man, I purpose to lie.[1]

This *Battle of Maldon* is like some embryonic *Roland*, a Song of Roland earlier than the legend. As in the French epic, there is a glorious defeat and an heroic death. It was long thought probable that about the beginning of the eleventh century, near

[1] Translation by J. M. Garnett

the date of the *Battle of Maldon,* a first sketch, in the form of a lay, existed for the *Song of Roland,* and the question arises whether there were not, in this period, a close resemblance between the two poems. Probably not, for *Maldon* is a strictly historical poem, which does not magnify its subject and which neither introduces the marvellous nor leaves room for its introduction by an editor. It is not the germ of something greater than itself but the fragment of a completed whole. The sentiment of the two works is indeed almost identical. Byrhtnoth makes it a point of honour to allow the Northmen to ford the river unhindered, exactly as Roland refuses to sound his trumpet in order to summon Charlemagne. Both heroes, out of chivalrous pride, prepare disaster. Byrhtnoth's attachment to his king, Æthelred, and that of his brothers-in-arms to himself, their leader, are matched by the tie of duty and love which binds Roland to Charlemagne and all the Frankish warriors to Roland. The coward Godrich is a pendant to the traitor Ganelon. And Byrhtnoth, like Roland, is a Christian slain by the pagans, whose last words are for God, the supreme leader of warriors, and who, because he is valiant and dies in battle, is sure of God's love.

In spite, however, of all these points of resemblance, *Byrhtnoth* is markedly distinct from *Roland.* It has the bare severity of history, while *Roland* has the prestige of legend. Heroic as they are, the exploits of the *Battle of Maldon* are not superhuman. They are more solid and less poetical than those of *Roland,* not deeds of impossible prowess but the actions of men who do no more than fight to the death. Disaster in *Byrhtnoth* is not transformed by imagination, and, in spite of the proud words of the dying chief, the noble harangues of his friends, the blows they finely deal, and all the delirium of danger and death, this poem is sad, as *Roland* cannot be sad, with its hope and triumph enduring even in defeat, its unfailing confidence in the divine mission of the Franks, and its radiance of light and colour beneath so much blue sky.

Byrhtnoth has a unique place in pre-Conquest poetical literature. Its apparently strict adherence to the actual course of events was unmatched until the advent of the Anglo-Norman trouvères, in particular Wace who sang the battle of Hastings. But while this poem does not use legend to transfigure facts, it yet dignifies them by the truly epical march of its story and the nobility of its alliterative verse, elements of greatness which are

lacking in Wace's octosyllabic lines. It has a rough simplicity which is disconcerting at a time when Anglo-Saxon poetry was exaggerating its rhetorical character. This poem is like a sign of vigour, a promise of renewal, at a moment when the literature to which it belongs is overweighted with periphrases to the point of exhaustion. *Byrhtnoth* stands in such isolation that no theory can be founded on it, yet it poses the question whether native poetry were not capable, without foreign help, of a new development, an unexpected renascence.

8. *The Riddles*,[1]—It may seem strange to include among the most interesting of the poetical works of the Anglo-Saxons an extant collection of riddles, attributed by several critics to Cynewulf, although on unconvincing evidence. But that riddles are thus dignified ceases to surprise when the enigmatic turn always affected by Anglo-Saxon poetry is remembered, its way of denoting an object by qualities rather than an exact name, its cult of periphrasis and its search for verbal subtleties, all tendencies which give a special tone to maxims and which whet curiosity. That the scops used to put riddles, to test the sagacity of the guests at banquets before whom they displayed their talents, may be admitted. But the riddles which have come down to us are not original and are all Christian. Most of them are founded on the Latin riddles of the clerk Aldhelm, who had himself taken the riddles of Symposius as models, and others derive from the Latin of Tatwine, Archbishop of Canterbury. The Anglo-Saxon riddle is, however, a very free copy. It became poetical when, so to speak, it ceased to be utilitarian. From a mere ingenious definition, intended only to arouse attention and sharpen the wits, it grew into a description, often copious, and not only personified its subject, but also animated it and gave it life. The narrow frame of the Latin riddle had been broken. Thus did Phædrus and, above all, La Fontaine, deal with the dry Æsopic fable. The Anglo-Saxon riddles are usually true poems, of varying and sometimes considerable length. They violate all the laws of the riddle at once, lack its curt precision and are too often diffuse and vague. As riddles, they must be allowed to be failures, but they make up for technical defects when the poet, led away by his subject, forgets to appeal to the intellect and speaks to the

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imagination. Anglo-Saxon prolixity, which wearies when it confuses and deforms the severe lines of the Bible, is easily excused when the translation of a riddle is in question.

The Anglo-Saxon riddles constitute a sort of encyclopædia, in which figure the animals, especially the domestic animals, the celestial bodies and phenomena, contemporary products of art and useful objects, arms, tools, musical instruments and articles of clothing. Several of them add to our picture of the customary life and implements of the Anglo-Saxons. If some are so obscure that they cannot be certainly solved, and some so marvellously gross that their presence in a pious compilation like the *Codex Exoniensis* is astonishing, others belong of right to literature, for instance the riddle on a shield:

> I am a recluse, with iron wounded,
> With faulchion scar'd, sated with works of war,
> Of edges weary; oft I battle see,
> Perilous fight; for comfort hope not,
> Or that safety to me shall come from martial strife,
> Ere I with generations shall all have perished;
> But they me shall strike with sword:
> The hard of edge, intensely sharp, hand-work of smiths,
> Shall bite among people: I must await
> The hostile meeting: never the healing tribe,
> In the battle-place, might I find,
> Who with plants my wounds would heal,
> But to me the edges' sores become increas'd,
> Through deadly stroke, by day and night.[1]

The riddle on a bull's horn, which can be both a trumpet and a cup, is rich and brilliant. There is first an armed warrior who is the bull, then a maiden "with rings adorned" who "fills my bosom," says the horn, and then warriors

> On horseback bear me; then with wind I must,
> Resplendent, swell from some one's bosom.

When the riddle describes the elemental forces of nature it becomes really lyrical. The riddle on the *Wind* or the *Storm* (Riddle IV.) is one of the most original and most modern of short Anglo-Saxon poems. It has been compared, without hyperbole, to Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, or rather to his *Cloud*, for in it the storm in exaltation chants its deeds and the changes it works. The storm is first represented as held, by the will of

[1] B. Thorpe's translation of Riddle VI.

the Creator, chained and captive beneath the earth, powerless within its dungeon. Set free, it stirs up the waters of the sea:

> Foamy strives wave against wall,
> Dusk rises mountain o'er deep;
> Dark on its track, in ocean,
> Another goes so that they meet,
> The land's limit near, the high shores.
> There the wood [1] is loud, the ocean-guests' noise;
> Still remain the rocky cliffs
> From the watery strife, the crew's outcry.
> When the towering mass on the cliffs presses,
> There shall be hope for the vessel, in the fierce contest,
> If it the sea shall bear, at that terrific time,
> Of guests full, so that it shall forthwith
> Be borne away, though vitally assail'd,
> Yet foamy ride on the waves' backs
> There shall be some terror to men display'd.[2]

The clatter of the tempest on land, as it pursues its destructive path over cities and the dwellings of men, is painted on as grand a scale, although the drawing is more confused and obscure.

Here the subject—the terror of the hurricane—and the necessary repetition of identical violent effects, combine to veil the habitual weaknesses of Anglo-Saxon poetry. Its qualities are thrown into relief, its defects momentarily hidden. The poem is powerful and arresting.

9. *Christian Poetry: The Cædmonian Poems and "Judith"* [3] —In all the poems hitherto examined there is some revelation of Christianity, or at least a certain attenuation of pagan characteristics, but they are not decidedly religious poems either in subject or in immediate intention. We have still to deal with the Christian poetry, properly so called, which is by far the larger, if the less original and, with few exceptions, the less formally beautiful part of this poetry. Whether because a greater volume of it was written, or because it was naturally more carefully preserved by the clerks, it fills almost all the extant collections of Anglo-Saxon verse.

This poetry is proof of the fervour with which, immediately upon their conversion, these Germanic pirates embraced the

[1] i.e. the ship.

[2] B. Thorpe's translation.

[3] B. Thorpe, *Cædmon's Metrical Paraphrase of Parts of the Holy Scriptures* [illegible] *with an English Translation* (Society of Antiquaries, 1832). [illegible] *Cædmon und seine Werke* (Bonn, 1882). F. A. Blackburn, [illegible] (Boston, 1907). See also A. Keiser, *The Influence of Christianity on the Vocabulary of Old English Poetry* (Urbana, [illegible]).

religion of Christ. At the end of the seventh and throughout the eighth century they made the great island they had conquered in an age of darkness into the most ardent and most radiant home of Christianity. Alliterative verse came to the aid of clerkly Latin to express their faith, spread it among the laity and made it really popular.

The origin of this Christian poetry in the vulgar tongue must be sought in the pages of Bede. He relates that in the monastery of Streoneshalh, now Whitby, in Northumbria, there was a brother whom God had honoured with his gifts and who excelled in glorifying piety and virtue in song. "Everything the clerks taught him out of Holy Writ, he soon afterwards reproduced in the English language, in poetic words and most melodiously." This man had reached old age without taking orders or learning any skill in poetry. "Wherefore being sometimes at feasts, when all agreed for glee's sake to sing in turn, he no sooner saw the harp come towards him than he rose from the board and turned homewards. Once, when he had done thus, and gone from the feast to the stable where he had that night charge of the cattle, there appeared to him in his sleep One who said, greeting him by name, 'Sing, Cædmon, some songs to Me.' 'I cannot sing,' he answered, 'for this cause left I the feast and came hither.' He who talked to him answered, 'However that be, you shall sing to Me.' 'What shall I sing?' rejoined Cædmon. 'The beginning of created things,' replied He." [1] Then Cædmon sang verses he had never heard to the glory of the Creator:

> Now must we praise the Guardian of heaven's kingdom,
> The Creator's might, and his mind's thought;
> Glorious Father of men! as of every wonder He,
> Lord eternal, formed the beginning.
> He first framed for the children of earth
> The heaven as a roof; holy Creator!
> Then mid-earth, the Guardian of mankind,
> The eternal Lord, afterwards produced;
> The earth for men, Lord Almighty.[2]

Cædmon awoke, remembered the words of the song he had composed in sleep, and added to it many others, all to the glory of God. Then he went to the reeve of his village and told him of the gift he had received from Heaven, and the reeve took him before the abbess, who assembled all the clerks and bade

[1] J. R. Green's translation.
[2] B. Thorpe's translation.

Cædmon sing to them. All were agreed "that a heavenly grace had been conferred on him by the Lord. They translated for Cædmon a passage in Holy Writ, bidding him, if he could, put the same into verse. The next morning he gave it them, composed in excellent verse, whereon the abbess, understanding the divine grace in the man, bade him quit the secular habit and take on him the monastic life. . . . He kept in mind everything that was taught to him, and as beasts of the field ruminate, so he turned it into melodious song, so sweet to the ear that his teachers became his hearers. He sang of the Creation of the world, of the origin of man, and of all the history of Israel, of their departure from Egypt and entering into the Promised Land, and other passages of Holy Scripture, the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection of Christ, and His ascension to Heaven, the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the teaching of the Apostles. He sang also of the terror of future judgment, the horrors of hell-pangs and the joys of heaven."

There is nothing in the Christian poems to approach the charm of Bede's artless story, as appears if his short, very representative quotation of verse be compared to his Latin prose, with its wealth of precise circumstance which gives everything a character. In the verse there are no facts. Their place is taken by ejaculations, repetitions and periphrases. Scholarship no longer admits the extant poems, written on the subjects Bede enumerates, to be the direct work of Cædmon, the old singer. They are paraphrases from other sources, at most later and altered versions of Cædmon's original. But their character has been little changed. The poems of the so-called Junius manuscript, which are not by Cædmon but are called Cædmonian in memory of him, are essentially biblical paraphrases. Some are on passages in the books of Genesis, Exodus and Daniel, and other fragments, not biblical in the strict sense, have for subject the fall of the rebel angels, Christ's descent into Hell and His temptation by Satan. To these it is natural to add the fragment of a poem on Judith, although it is of later date and, strangely enough, not included in the Junius manuscript, but in the same manuscript as *Beowulf*.

What has been said of the origins of this biblical poetry makes the intention of the Anglo-Saxon poets sufficiently clear. They would not and could not invent. Their aim was to popularise Holy Writ. If sometimes they added to the Bible, their addi-

tions were based on pious commentaries or earlier Christia poems which they regarded as equally authentic, for instance o the poem in which Avitus of Vienne relates the Fall of the Angel

What, then, is the original element which can be proved t exist in their poems? It is first and especially an originality o form. They recast the Bible in the mould of their nationa poetry, transposing it into alliterative verse, and giving it that half-epical, half-lyrical turn which characterises all their poetry, and which made their rendering of several passages of the Hebrew poem a happy one.

Secondly, they transcribed not only with all the fervour of recent converts, but also with all the artlessness of an ignorant people, who imagined the Jews like themselves, who saw God in Heaven with his angels like their own king surrounded by his thegns, who could not escape from themselves, their own customs and their own climate, and who instinctively put their own feelings into Jewish history, and pictured a Judæa washed by the sullen and icy waters of the North Sea.

This transposition is especially noticeable in the sea pictures, which testify to the nautical experience of the vikings, and in the battle stories, which rekindled the ardour of the scops, so that they drew on their pagan tradition for conventional details —the clash of spears, the helmeted warriors, the war-cries, the black crows cawing over carrion.

The misunderstanding has curious and picturesque effects, and the too complete assimilation of the Bible makes for life and vehemence, but there is monotony in these poets' imagination, which unfailingly reduces the whole of the world's contents to two or three sentiments and two or three unvarying descriptions.

If, for a moment, these Anglo-Saxon poems are not read indulgently, if we cease to make allowances for them, almost as we do for the sketches of children and savage peoples, but, like some critics, overpraise them, the heavy pompousness of the paraphrases at once becomes evident, in contrast to the sober and sublime vigour of the Bible; and Ten Brink is seen to be guilty of flattery when he says that "the originality of the Anglo-Saxon poet of *Genesis* is revealed only in detail and execution. The simple, terse expression of the Scriptural narrative is exchanged for a broad, often impassioned, epic style." Very often, the Anglo-Saxon has overlaid beauties not apparent to him with the weight of his words:

The Bible	*The Paraphrase*
And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.	The earth as yet was not green with grass; Ocean cover'd, swart in eternal night, Far and wide, the dusky ways. Then was the glory-bright Spirit of heaven's guardian Borne over the deep, with utmost speed: The Creator of angels bade, the Lord of life, Light to come forth over the spacious deep. Forthwith was fulfilled the High King's command; For him was holy light spread over the waste, As the Worker had ordered.[1]

Indisputably, the Anglo-Saxon diverges from his model; he is himself. But the sum of his originality is his promiscuous piling-up of words, which hides, rather than reveals, the great outline of the primitive chaos. Above all, it drags out the act of creation, which showed the might of God by its very swiftness. The God of the Anglo-Saxon fumbles awkwardly before he lights up the world. There could be no better lesson on the difference between grandiose verbosity and the true sublime.

The effect is not accidental. It recurs in almost every passage of this paraphrase, which partial critics quote with approval. *Exodus* has the same defect, that of detailed description which aims at grandeur and misses sublimity. The Bible says:

"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided."

Mr. Stopford Brooke praises what he calls the "vivid realistic way" of the Anglo-Saxon poet in the paraphrase, but it is a very childish realism, which consists in making Moses describe the phenomenon to his people as he accomplishes it.

> Lo! ye now with your eyes behold,
> Most beloved of people, a stupendous wonder;
> How I myself have struck, and this right hand,
> With a green sign, the ocean's deep:
> The wave ascends; rapidly worketh

[1] B. Thorpe's translation.

The water a wall-fastness, the ways are dry,
Rugged army-roads; the sea hath left
Its old stations; where I before have never heard,
Over mid-earth, men to journey,
Are variegated fields, which from this time,
Through eternity, the waves have covered.[1]

Thus the great wizard, whose silent gesture had worked the miracle, is changed into an artless gossip whom the miracle seems to amaze as much as it does his people.

Although the later poet who paraphrased *Judith*,[2] and who deserves gratitude for his choice of this admirable book of the *Apocrypha*, is more vigorous, a comparison of his Anglo-Saxon text with the original shows that he also has not recognised true sublimity, and stumbles beneath the enormous weight of his poetic ornament and conventions. It should perhaps also be said that to the confused intelligence of the Anglo-Saxon poet, that quality of keen, steely decision which constitutes the character of the heroine was inconceivable. The biblical Judith never says a word which does not lead straight to action; the Saxon Judith wraps her thought in periphrases, so that the feeling of action is lost. She repeats herself interminably. Her gestures, like her thoughts, reach us through a fog of words. Compare her words in the two texts—for instance, when she beseeches the Lord for help before she strikes Holofernes, or when, returning to Bethulia with the Assyrian general's head, she summons the Jews to battle: always a showy, awkward verbosity is substituted for the cutting precision of lucid words. The woman of action has been changed into a sort of prophetess, drunk with excitement, exalted, vague and frenzied.

There remains that part of the Anglo-Saxon biblical epic which treats of the *Fall of the Angels*,[3] and the machinations of the prince of the fallen angels to avenge himself on God, who has cast him into Hell, by causing Adam and Eve to commit the first sin. It is the very subject of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and this identity of theme, together with certain likenesses of emphasis and language, have given rise to a surmise that Milton who was Junius's friend, was inspired by the old poem. The presumed imitation has even shed a sort of reflected glory on the Anglo-Saxon work. The paraphrase is here not of the Bible,

[1] B. Thorpe's translation.
[2] A. S. Cook, *Judith* (with English translation, Boston, 1904).
[3] E. Sievens, *Der Heliand und die angelsächsische Genesis* (Halle, 1875).

but of a Latin poem by Avitus, and there is a freedom of imagination not found in the other Cædmonian poems, and an attempt at a psychological explanation of the first sin. The versification, the style and even the vocabulary also have special characteristics which make it resemble the continental Saxon poem, *Heliand*, or *The Saviour*, and critics incline to think that it is a translation or imitation of a lost poem of similar origin.

However this may be, the *Fall of the Angels* is interesting by its study of motives—those of Satan, jealous and ambitious but courageous and great; of Eve, seduced but not perverse; of Adam who yields to Eve because he knows her for lost and would share her fall. The lines spoken by Satan have outstanding energy. The conception of some of his monologues is worthy of Milton, as when he dreams of emancipating himself from the divine supremacy, or when, in the depths of Hell, he plots his vengeance. Unfortunately, it was in the form of the poem that the author, since he had not invented the subject, had most scope, and his style is extraordinarily redundant and wordy. Without many cuts the poem can hardly bear translation. If Milton knew it, he may have owed to it some vigorous strokes of his brush, but he cleared away its terrible prolixities and repetitions, and reclothed their sentiment in the majesty of his close, strong language. Milton might be a Cædmon whom the lessons of classical antiquity and a better understanding of the Bible had taught to compose, to select and to direct.

10. *Cynewulf: "Christ" and the Lives of the Saints.*[1]—While the critics, robbing Cædmon like another Homer, have bereft him of the biblical poems, they have brought out of the void a poet whose very name was previously unknown. It was noticed that two poems in the *Codex Exoniensis*, the *Christ* and the *Life of Saint Juliana*, and two in the Vercelli manuscript, *Saint Helen* and the *Fate of the Apostles*, included runic characters which, when deciphered, gave the same name, *Cynewulf*. The conclusion was that this must be the name of the author, especially as the passages containing the runes had a personal and almost autobiographical character which distinguished them from others. Starting from this discovery, the critics were for a time so daring

[1] A. S. Cook, *The Christ of Cynewulf* (Boston, 1900), *The Dream of the Rood* (Oxford, 1905); I. Gollancz, *Cynewulf's Christ* (1892, with translation). Translation into modern English by J. M. Garnett (Boston, 1901), translation of *Elene* by L. H. Holt (Yale Studies in English, 1904), and of *Andreas* by R. K. Root (ibid., 1899). C. W. Kennedy, *The Poems of Cynewulf* (transl. and intr., 1910).

as to claim for this poet the authorship of most of the other verses included in the same two manuscripts. On the basis of a dubious solution of the first riddle, all the riddles were attributed to Cynewulf. Doubtful resemblances of form and subject were a pretext for assigning to him other lives of the saints, those of Saint Andreas and Saint Guthlac, and other pious poems, the *Phœnix* and the *Dream of the Rood.* Almost, he was erected into the single author of all the Christian Anglo-Saxon poetry extant. Finally, a search was made in history for this Cynewulf, and after much conjecture he was identified, not certainly but probably, with a Cynewulf who was bishop of Lindisfarne and lived in the middle of the eighth century. Every trace of a personal confession contained in these poems was then collected, and a portrait and biography of Cynewulf was constructed. He was a wandering singer or poet who lived a gay and secular life. The accuracy of some of his battle-scenes and seascapes showed that he had fought on land and sailed the seas. Finally, after a dream in which he had a vision of the Holy Rood, he changed his life, became a religious poet, sang of Christ, the apostles and the saints.

The structure is ingenious but it is frail, and it was no sooner conceived than gaps were made in it, so that to take up a stand on it is to risk perpetual falls into the unknown. The fact is that nothing is known to show either which works are properly ascribed to Cynewulf, or the century in which he lived or his place of birth. While he seems to have been born in Northumbria, his verses, like all those of his fellow-countrymen, have reached us in the dialect of the West Saxons.

It can hardly be disputed that Cynewulf's reputation with critics has gained by the pleasures of discovery. It is not uncommon in these days to hear him compared to William Cowper or even Dante. His *Christ,* which seemed to its first editor a tissue of obscurely tangled threads, is to-day translated, annotated and published like a classic. The severity with which Cynewulf's work must be estimated is made indispensable by the extravagance of the praise given to it.

Of the probable writings of Cynewulf—that is, of those which contain his runic signature—the *Christ* alone is original, at least in part. Its seventeen hundred lines have been disentangled by scholarship to show a composition in three parts, a sort of triptych which celebrates the Advent of Christ, that is his birth, his going-

away or Ascension, and his second coming at the Last Judgment. Even after patient study has marked such distribution of the poem into parts, it is difficult to read it without losing the thread on every page, so profound is the obscurity of the thought and so hesitating the march of the narrative. The obscurity is a little due to the loss of the beginning of the poem, but much more to the radical weakness of a befogged intelligence, led away by words rather than guided by ideas. Cynewulf's verses are vague effusions, based on anthems, homilies and hymns, and they suffer by a comparison with their frequently sublime originals, even more than do the Cædmonian paraphrases when these are put side by side with the words of the Bible.

This is proved if the third *passus* of the *Christ*, the fullest and most imposing of the three, be examined. Its basis is the admirable hymn, *De Die Judicii*, formerly ascribed to Saint Gregory, which is itself no more than a metrical version of one of the most beautiful chapters of the Gospels, the twenty-fifth of Saint Matthew. Out of its twenty-three distichs Cynewulf makes eight hundred lines, and the sole effect of his vast additions is to draw a thick veil over the sober grandeur of the images, to obliterate the sublime unity of thought and sentiment, and to surround with darkness the central idea so brilliantly clear in Christ's dialogue with the righteous and wicked—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

It is hardly credible that although Cynewulf has kept this thought, he does not seem to have perceived its grandeur, to such a point has he smothered it with trite and commonplace developments. It is possible to read the third *passus* without noticing it.

Even those of Cynewulf's images which have been most praised by his commentators are often no more than weak embroideries on the severe and strong outline of his original. It takes him ten lines to render the first distich, "Suddenly the great day of the Lord will come, Like a thief in the dark night falling upon unwitting sleepers," and he adds to it only words, not a single exact circumstance. Or else, with thick, prosaic commentary, he drags out a phrase which impresses by its brevity. "The glorious King will sit upon his heavenly throne, Surrounded by the trembling (*tremebunda*) ranks of his angels," is rendered by Cynewulf as follows:

Heaven's angels' King holy shall shine,
Glorious o'er the hosts, the powerful God;
And around him chiefs most excellent,
Holy martial bands shall brightly shine,
A train of blessed angels: they inwardly
Tremble with fear, for terror of the Father.
Therefore 'tis not any wonder, how of worldly men
The impure race, sadly sorrowing,
Shall sorely dread, when the holy race,
White and heaven-bright, the archangel-host,
Before that countenance is with dread affrighted.[1]

Even where he depicts the catastrophe of the Last Day, winning high praise from the critics for poetic power, and giving himself free rein, it is hard to discern anything in his work but unending, wearisome repetition of the words which express the idea of ruin and conflagration.

It is not suggested that Cynewulf is insincere, but is maintained that all the many sighs and incoherent complaints of his gloomy spirit are not worthy to be compared with the high exaltation of a clear-eyed Christian. Exuberance of language and prolix facility of versification: these are the sum of Cynewulf's qualities. He has written some of the most fluent and melodious verses in Anglo-Saxon poetry, but he has done it by the sacrifice of all precision, and the accomplishment is not worth its price.

The runic signature of the same Cynewulf occurs in a *Saint Juliana* and a *Saint Helen*, poems which are pleasantly differentiated from the *Christ* by their continuous story and the respite they afford from vague effusiveness. Two other lives of saints, Saint Andreas and Saint Guthlac, once also attributed to Cynewulf by some critics, are now denied to him. The absolute decision of this question of authorship, when the author concerned is so hypothetical a person, has little importance. It is more interesting to establish the distinguishing characteristics of hagiography in Anglo-Saxon verse.

Saint Juliana, Saint Helen and Saint Andreas are exotic saints, whose legends, doubtless transcribed from Greek to Latin, have been, on the whole, faithfully followed by the Anglo-Saxon poets. All of them have an oriental element of the marvellous, evidently seductive to the Anglo-Saxon imagination, a taste which was to affect profane literature also, and to make the English the first

[1] B. Thorpe's translation.

translators of the complicated romance of *Apollonius of Tyre*, whence Shakespeare drew the incidents of his *Pericles*. Since invention had hardly any part in the writing of these lives of saints, their principal value, beyond the few modifications of the stories, is to show what were the themes which appealed to the imagination of their authors.

The life of Saint Juliana, a Christian maiden of Nicomedia, victorious over the demon Belial, who tries vainly to tempt her, and a martyr to her faith, is distinguished by the clearness and swiftness of the story. But the pace involves dryness and an absence of poetry and emotion.

The life of Saint Elene or Saint Helen is told more expansively. The story is that of the Invention of the True Cross by the mother of the Emperor Constantine after his victory over the Huns (*sic*). Constantine's warlike expedition, the battle and Helen's voyage over the sea to Judæa give scope for the traditional descriptive effects, so that the native verse is in its element and easily falls into the epic mood.

Saint Andreas is the most crowded and the most Byzantine of these legends. Long analysis would be necessary to exhaust the list of the saint's miracles on his way to deliver the apostle, Saint Matthew, held captive by the cannibal Myrmidons. He crosses a raging sea, Christ being, without his knowledge, the pilot of his boat; an invisible form, he enters the dungeon in which Saint Matthew lies; the cannibals are infuriated when their prisoner is set free; Saint Andreas is tortured but remains invulnerable; he avenges himself by a flood which he lets loose upon the town by an order to one of the columns of his prison to scatter torrents of water; his wrath is appeased by the prayers of the terrified people; he commands the mountain to be riven, and the waters, into which the people had been plunged up to their armpits, are cast into its breach; the astounded Myrmidons undergo mass conversion.

These are only some of the incidents which swarm in the seventeen hundred lines of the poem. The exuberant wealth of happenings saves *Saint Andreas* from the diffuse wordiness of most Anglo-Saxon Christian poems. It is less diluted than most of them. The unknown author is nevertheless to be suspected of a rhetoric not so innocent as that of his predecessors. As Stopford Brooke has well said, he is a "sensationalist." So, truth to tell, is Cynewulf, when in *Saint Helen* he piles up in cold blood

the periphrases he loves too well. "I was stained with crimes," he says when he is confessing his sins, "till the Lord, my . . . bone-house unbound, breast-lock unwound, song-craft unlocked."

They are strange, these poems. The web of the Byzantine romances is studded with heavy Anglo-Saxon jewellery.

Besides the lives of these exotic saints, there is one of a native saint, Saint Guthlac. It is, unfortunately, the most imperfect of the four, made of two badly joined parts of which the first is confused and mediocre. Yet this poem deserves a brief attention, for it confirms and completes certain observations suggested by the Christian paraphrases.

It is founded on a story told in Latin prose by Felix, a monk of Crowland in Mercia. Saint Guthlac's life, as related by Felix, is worthy of a place beside the life of another saint which is told by Bede, that of Saint Cuthbert. It is rich in legends which are of the soil of Great Britain, redolent of artless popular beliefs. To read it is to feel oneself at the very source of the religious feeling of the past. Guthlac, the son of a Mercian noble and born near the end of the seventh century, has become a hermit, and has built himself a hut in a lonely island in the midst of wide marshlands to the north of Granta. There he is tormented by hideous demons, "who speak the British tongue"—perhaps none others than the first owners of the land the Mercians had engrossed. He makes every kind of humble divination, showing his simple shrewdness, and accomplishes numerous unambitious cures which pass for miracles. But what especially endears him is a fondness for animals worthy of Saint Francis of Assisi. The birds tamed by his kindness are all about him. He loves the beasts, knows their ways, talks to them, is really saddened if they are guilty of an unjust or malicious action.

His life in prose is full of true charm and fragrance. Together with the stories by Bede which have been mentioned, it gives an idea of the rich material which the ingenuous faith of this country and these ages offered to religious poetry. But the metrical life of Saint Guthlac makes a painful impression of emptiness. All that was concrete and picturesque in the Latin prose has given place, in these verses, to an exalted treatment of the subject which makes it unintelligible to a reader without other knowledge of it. The story has no thread; there are no outlines; everything is confused. The struggle with the demons has become an abstract

argument. Even the second part of the poem, which deals with the death of the saint and has moments of beauty, cannot still the regret for the exactness of the prose original. Here again is evidence of the sins of this oppressive rhetoric, which so rarely allows the Anglo-Saxon poets to express themselves simply.

11. *Other Christian Poems: the "Dream of the Rood," the "Bestiary," the "Phœnix." Didactic Poems.*—The Christian poetry of the Anglo-Saxons is not all comprised in the biblical paraphrases and the lives of the saints. It also includes some noteworthy poems of a different kind.

It has been seen that Cynewulf was led by his devotion to the Cross to choose the legend of Saint Helen as a subject, and it is tempting to see in him the author of the *Dream of the Rood*, since such a dream is said to have determined his conversion. To personify the Holy Cross was a natural tendency of faith, more than once manifest in the Latin verses of the clerks. Thus in Saint Fortunatus's admirable and impassioned hymn, *Vexilla Regis prodeunt*, the poet's love is moved by the wood of the Cross which the cruel lance has stricken and which flows with blood and water. "Beautiful and shining tree . . . chosen the holy limbs to touch, blessed Cross from whose arms hung the Ransom of the World. . . . Hail, Cross, sole hope! . . ."

The same sentiment and the same image have inspired the Anglo-Saxon poet. Incapable of the concentrated and poignant forcefulness of Saint Fortunatus, he has at least an ingenious dream of his own, not so diffuse as to be without outline. In it he sees the miraculous tree, by turns shining with jewels and bathed in blood. It speaks to him and relates to him its life from the day when it was struck down on the verge of the forest, to that on which "the young Hero, brave and strong," was lifted on to it, and it trembled as it received the kiss of God in Man. It is now honoured by men, their beacon-light and the cure for all their ills.

At an early date Christian literature gave symbolic meaning to natural phenomena, and particularly to animals which were especially fabulous. It followed, in so doing, both the parables of the Bible and Greek fables. Hence the *Bestiaries* of the Middle Ages, called *Physiologi* in Latin. Anglo-Saxon is the first vernacular language in which a *Bestiary* occurs, a mere fragment embracing the Panther, the Whale and part of a passage on the

Partridge. Anglo-Saxon verse lends itself to this poetic form much as it does to the riddle. The same stretch of imagination is needed. The description of the Whale—Fastitocalon, who is as large as an island, so that confiding ships anchor on his sides and sailors land on his back, to kindle a fire and feast—is on a scale which Milton repeats. Naturally, the enormous beast chooses the very instant at which pleasure reaches its height to plunge into the sea, taking ship and sailors with him. Even so the devil plays with the souls of men, duping them with his false lures that he may the better carry them off to Hell.

The *Phœnix* is an independent poem, but it is very like these others in character. The fourth-century poet Lactantius, taking his subject from Ovid and Claudian, had transformed the mythological phœnix, which burnt itself to be reborn of its own ashes, into a symbol of Christ and the Christian soul. His short Latin poem, *Phœnix,* is a work of eighty-five distichs, conventional in style, a mosaic of the classical poets which is spoilt by its dryness and its too enigmatic turn.

This time the Anglo-Saxon poet, who has expanded the theme to seven hundred lines, has the advantage over his model. Anglo-Saxon plenty here relieves happily the effects of a Latin drought. The poet brings new moving warmth into his treatment of a subject which mythological memories and terms had frozen to lifelessness. Instead of getting further away from nature, as he diverges from his model, he sometimes seems to put the fresh life of his own impressions into an entirely artificial composition. He thus more than compensates for his inevitable inferiority in lucidity and terseness. His endearing if diffuse description of the paradise in which the Phœnix dwells is preferable to the cold brevity of the Latin. It is true that either northern impotence or Anglo-Saxon rhetoric has made the poet unequal to painting a flowery and sunny place of delights, and that he is most at ease when he is paraphrasing the list of the scourges which this Eden is spared. But even in this too negative description there is more charm than the poets of his country were wont to put into their pictures. His smooth and ample verses succeed better than those of Lactantius in suggesting the marvellous harmony of the songs of the Phœnix. The ardent homily with which the poem ends is a commentary on Lactantius's last line—"Aeternam vitam mortis adepta bono"—which has a strong precision beyond the later poet.

But the homily has an unction and a melody which finally make this poem probably the most attractive of all those written in alliterative verse.

This survey of the Christian poetry must include several short didactic pieces, the *Gifts of Men*, the *Weirds of Men* and *Ten Instructions of a Father to his Son*. In these, Anglo-Saxon poetry is sententious. The *Dialogues Between Solomon and Saturn*, in which the fantastic varies the didactic, are more curious. They are imitations of a lost Latin original, itself taken from a vanished Greek source, and are the prototypes of the dialogues between Solomon and Marcolf which were so popular in the Middle Ages. Saturn, who has nothing in common with the god of mythology, is a Chaldean prince sprung from a family of demons. He is acquainted with all books but not with the magic of the *Pater Noster* which he makes Solomon explain to him.

It is not always in such amusing fictions that Christian morality finds expression. It loves to bring before men lugubrious images of death and decomposition, to humiliate the body which constantly leads the soul to stray from the path of salvation. Hence the struggles between body and soul which held so large a place in the imagination of this age of faith. Anglo-Saxon poetry soon took possession of this theme, of which the cruelty was aggravated by the habitual heaviness of alliterative verse. Thus it is with the *Discourse of the Soul to Its Body*. The soul inveighs against the body, already corrupt and the prey of the voracious worm with jaws sharper than the needle, which once tempted to the sins for which it now suffers the pains of Hell. The soul, in revenge, describes with savage joy the decomposition of the fatal body.

The grave is similarly evoked at the end of a volume of homilies, but this time it is Death who speaks and with sombre realism calls up the picture of man's last abode.

It is true that these images cannot be taken as peculiar to the Anglo-Saxon imagination. They are essentially Christian and also, it may be said, representative of the gloomiest of the Christian centuries. It is, however, impossible not to notice how aptly the rude verse and violent rhetoric of the Anglo-Saxons render their dismay and emphasise their horror.

12. *Anglo-Saxon Prose. Alfred, Ælfric, Wulfstan.*[1]—The

[1] *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa*, ed. by C W M. Grein, R. P. Wülker

breach between Anglo-Saxon and English poetry is everywhere apparent, and to pass from Cynewulf to Chaucer is to bridge a deep gulf. The poetry of the Anglo-Saxons is deliberately archaic. In order to produce a desired emotional state in its hearers, it reverts to traditional turns of expression, to words almost consecrated, as religion works its effects by the constantly recurring use of an ancient liturgy. This poetry is modelled on an earlier age of which the remoteness cannot now be determined. It retains many periphrases and locutions already obsolete, imitates and systematises the disorder of primitive lyrical construction. The poetic form tends towards the past.

On the other hand, the tendency of the prose is towards observance of the rules of ordinary speech, unless it copy the Latin prose of the clerks. Its object is to instruct and inform, not to move, and since it thus educates the understanding, it necessarily turns to the future. There is therefore nothing surprising in the fact that the prose writings of the Anglo-Saxons, which are much less curious than their poetry, are also much nearer ourselves. No revolution seems to separate Alfred's pages from those of Caxton, Ælfric's from Wyclif's. There is a change but no break. National and linguistic continuity is felt to exist; there almost seems to be a continuity in the thought as it is framed in much the same mould as now. While an Englishman has to make a quite considerable effort in order to read the verse of the Anglo-Saxons, he finds it comparatively easy to understand their prose.

If such facility be not marked in the oldest prose literature, this is because it is either of earlier compilation than any of the poetry extant—like the laws of Ina, king of the West Saxons, which were promulgated at the end of the seventh century although our transcription dates only from the time of Alfred—or because some of this prose is more than half poetry and seems to be fragments of old epic tales. This character belongs to many passages of the chronicle usually attributed to the influence of King Alfred, of which we have distinct versions written by the

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and H. Hecht, Leipzig and Hamburg, 1872 et sqq. *The Whole Works of King Alfred the Great*, ed. J. A. Giles, 3 vols. (Oxford and Cambridge, 1858); Stopford Brooke, *King Alfred as Educator of His People and Man of Letters* (1901); H. Sweet, *Selections from Ælfric's Homilies* (Oxford, 1896); A. Napier, *Wulfstan's Homilies* (Berlin, 1883); B. Thorpe, *Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, 2 vols. (Ælfric Society, 1844-6); C. L. White, *Ælfric, a New Study of His Life and Writings* (Yale Studies in English, 1898).

religious of different monasteries, those of Winchester, Canterbury, Abingdon, Worcester and Peterborough, the last-named having continued its narrative to the middle of the twelfth century. In this chronicle several references to early times, brief but impressively vehement, are pagan in feeling and emphasis and seem to date from the pre-Christian period. Even in the references to the eighth century there are a suddenness and a roughness in the narrative which betray that mental and grammatical habits were still empirical. It is continually necessary to complete the ellipses and to relate the pronouns to their proper subjects, as with a story told by a small child. For instance, the chronicler relates, as follows, the beginning of the struggle between Cynewulf and Sebright in 755:

> This year Cynewulf took from Sebright his kingdom, and the councillors of the West Saxons [did as much], for unrighteous deeds, except Hamptonshire, and he [that is Sebright] reigned there [that is, in Hampshire] until he slew the alderman who stayed longest with him. Then Cynewulf drove him to the forest of Andred, where he remained until a swain stabbed him at Privett, and he [that is, the swain] revenged the alderman Cumbra.

The alderman is not named until he is mentioned for the second time.

This formless prose was succeeded at the end of the ninth century by a regular prose, possessed of nearly all its essential parts. Since it is modelled on Latin texts, which are almost literally translated, it is very near English prose, as that was fixed, and also near French prose which was formed under the same masters.

Alfred, the glorious king of Wessex, was the pioneer of the prose-writers. The exclusively poetic or Latin literature which had hitherto flourished had emanated principally from the north-east, the country of the Angles, or from Central Mercia. About 800, the supremacy was passing to the southwest, and the king of Wessex was tending toward the sovereignty of all the Germanic groups settled in the island. But the Danish invasions supervened, and with them the destruction of the centres of religion and letters. In the year 878 it seemed as though nothing would escape the invaders. It was then that the young King Alfred withdrew to Athelney in Somerset, formed there a nucleus of resistance, defeated the Danes, and won from them a treaty which left him the south of England while they remained

masters of the old country of the Angles and Northern Mercia.

After his victory, Alfred set himself to retrieve his country from the barbarism to which it had relapsed. A decadent and demoralised clergy had sunk into depths of ignorance. Alfred did for Wessex what Charlemagne, a hundred years earlier, had done for the country of the Franks: he endeavoured to teach the people, and to re-establish Christian discipline and culture, and for this end he brought foreign monks into his kingdom and reformed education. It was under his influence that the earlier poetic works, which had almost all been written in the Northumbrian dialect, were transcribed into the language of the West Saxons.

The part which the king himself took in this literary movement was considerable. His early education had been much neglected, and he had to learn before he could teach. He surrounded himself with scholars and learned men, learnt Latin after he was grown up, for Saxon had been the only language of his childhood, and had no sooner learnt it than he began to translate the works which seemed to him most apt to civilise his people. It was thus that he became the father of English prose-writers.

Whether in the works he inspired or in those he himself produced, an effort is apparent to regularise the old elliptical, abrupt style, with its obscurity and lack of continuity. Thus the Annals or Chronicles of Winchester, Alfred's capital town, were amplified and given smoothness until they are almost a continuous story, in which, for instance, the history of the king's war against the Danes can be read without any irritating difficulty in following the text.

Alfred himself is credited with a translation of the *Universal History* of Orosius, the compilation which made antiquity known to the Middle Ages. The task was difficult, for Orosius, a Spanish historian and theologian of the fifth century, writes an obscure, tortured Latin. Sometimes Alfred, as he himself says, translates "word by word, sometimes meaning of meaning." Although the literal translation had the most formative influence on prose, it is naturally the free version which most attracts us. Its very weaknesses are characteristic. Alfred, who does not know Latin very well and who has acquired no historical sense, aims at producing a work of pedagogy. The result is that he is often very inexact,

and that, as he diverges from his author, he attains to a certain originality. While he deletes what seems to him of little use to his subjects, he also makes additions, especially in the geographical section. One of the stories he adds, that of Ottar's sail along the shores of Scandinavia, is so simple and elementary in style that its vocabulary differs only slightly from modern English. The conclusion is that the spoken language was almost fixed.

Of Alfred's other translations, either made or ordered by him —Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the Angles*, the *Pastoral Rule* of Gregory the Great and the *Consolation* of Boethius [1]—it is the Boethius which is the most interesting. His choice of this book, which was again translated by Chaucer, is characteristic. Boethius has reproduced the Platonic and Stoic doctrines, coloured by Christianity and at their highest moral level—the distinction between true and false happiness, the lofty discussions on the existence of evil, on human liberty and on divine prescience. He gives these abstractions a dramatic frame. Philosophy herself appears to him in his prison, and drives away the Muses, those prostitutes who were vainly seeking to console him. Thus he makes use of allegory, and although his style is not always pure and is often mannered, it is full of life and movement. His book could not but suffer gravely when it was translated by Alfred, who mistakes the meaning fairly frequently and is incapable of conveying the fine shades. When he renders the metrical passages, which have a classic elegance, his limitations obtrude themselves. But in nobility of sentiment he is the equal of the Latin author. He explains, as follows, his reasons for undertaking this arduous task:

> I have desired material for the exercise of my faculties that my talents and my power might not be forgotten and hidden away, for every good gift and every power soon groweth old and is no more heard of, if wisdom be not in them. Without wisdom no faculty can be fully brought out, for whatsoever is done unwisely can never be accounted as skill. To be brief, I may say that it has ever been my desire to live honourably while I was alive, and after my death to leave to them that should come after me my memory in good works.

This king's literary work was, like his political work, interrupted for almost a century after his death in 901. The sketchy civilisation of Wessex was once more scattered to the winds, and

[1] King Alfred, *Old English Version of Boethius*, ed Sedgefield (Oxford, 1899).

the clerks relapsed to ignorance and inertia. They were gradually redeemed thence, during the tenth century, by a reform of the monasteries which was inspired by the similar movement accomplished in France under the influence of the Benedictines. Religious houses were founded and organised in England, on the model of the abbeys of Cluny and Fleury, in which a strict rule enjoined intellectual work. This innovation was led by Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, and his friend Æthelwold, "the father of the monks." Secular priests, not bound to celibacy, then abounded in the monasteries. They retained something of the patriarchal constitution which the Church of Ireland had originally given to their communities, and therewith very disorderly morals, much laziness and gross superstition. The fact is proved by the so-called *Blickling Homilies,* a medley of canonical and uncanonical legends which swarm with strange arguments and allusions. It is to works of this kind that Ælfric alludes when he says, "I have seen and heard many heresies in many an English book which unlearned men, in their simplicity, took for great wisdom." Stories of the saints, replete with the marvellous, and the obsession that the end of the world was at hand, take up most space in this collection.

It was at this time that the strict rule of St. Benedict was introduced. Morals once more became austere. The lives of the saints did indeed remain the principal subject of study and the marvellous continued to fill a large place in them, but the stories, as compared with their predecessors, were pure and even reasonable. Two men who with Alfred are the best writers of Anglo-Saxon prose are connected with this reform, Ælfric and Wulfstan.

Ælfric was a pupil of the monastic school which Æthelwold founded at Abingdon, and he wrote in the first years of the eleventh century. We owe to him a *Colloquium* for teaching Latin by conversation, and a vocabulary which was the first Latin-English dictionary. But he made his name by his *Homilies,* that is, his compilations and translations from the Fathers of the Church which form two series of forty sermons each, and commemorate the various saints venerated by the Anglo-Saxon church.

Ælfric's prose, unlike that of Alfred, is written not to be read but to be spoken to the people, in the conventional tone of a priest delivering a sermon. It has therefore a rhythm which brings it near to verse: its sentences are divided into sections, more or less equivalent to the metrical line, and it is frequently alliterative.

For this reason scholars were long uncertain whether to classify it as verse or prose. It celebrates the saints, as the scops once sang the deeds of warriors. This poetic prose marks a great advance on that of Alfred. It aims at beauty, measure and harmony. It is remarkably clear and finished. There is much less awkwardness and effort in the connection of phrases than in Alfred's writings. In fact, the author is consciously literate, even when he is using the vulgar tongue, and he excuses himself, with some shame, for the popular character of his translation of the Latin homilies, pleading the ignorance of his fellow-countrymen.

Wulfstan, who was Archbishop of York from 1002 to 1023, was first of all a preacher. The most remarkable of his homilies dates from 1012, the time when the English were suffering the ills of the Danish invasions. With deep feeling, the homilist deplores the irreligion and immorality of his people, to which he attributes their misfortunes, and he proclaims the near advent of the great chastiser, the Antichrist. Wulfstan is less of a finished artist than Ælfric, but the popular emphasis of his language gives it rich colour and lively tones.

After Wulfstan all was over: the Antichrist came indeed. The Danes became masters of the country, and then, after a short interval of independence, the Anglo-Saxons were brought under the Norman yoke. Such prose writings as we have prove, however, that, even without the Norman Conquest, Anglo-Saxon prose would have taken shape, modelling itself on Latin, and, with the exception of part of its vocabulary, would have become much what it was when in the fourteenth century it regained a place in literature.

It was poetry which was principally affected by the Conquest. The poetic form had outlived its time and had little life left in it. It was conventional and was getting farther and farther away from the real language of the people. It was fated to be abolished and superseded. The æsthetic ideal was to undergo a change, or rather a revolution. England was to learn to love verse of another kind, other cadences and new subjects. All the rich ornament which profusely decorated verse with a pomp still half barbaric was to go out of fashion. Poets were to shed their periphrases and ejaculations, and gradually to learn sobriety of style and an art almost unknown to them, that of stating facts clearly, grouping them, and inventing stories.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO CHAUCER
(1066-1350)

1. *General Character of Old French Literature.*—The literary ideal changed at the Norman Conquest of 1066. The conquerors were, it is true, of the race of the pagan Danes whose incursions had for so long afflicted Great Britain, but from the time they had become masters of the French province which has been called Normandy, they had been gallicised with a rapidity which was prodigious, and had forgotten their paganism with the country of their origin and its language and traditions. At the time of their conquest of the great island they were real Frenchmen, in language and civilisation, nor had they failed to draw into their expedition many an adventurer from neighbouring French provinces.

It was therefore the French literary ideal which they imported into Great Britain together with their laws and administration. Before their supremacy, the native language receded, was degraded so that it was kept alive only by the lower strata of the population. Anglo-Saxon literature seemed to disappear entirely, not only was silent for a century, but severed nearly all its ties with its past. The only literature other than Latin which was known to whosoever had any knowledge of letters was the literature of France. It was in its infancy at the time of the Battle of Hastings, but a rapid growth made it the first of European literatures in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and spread its glory and influence far beyond the confines of France. One of its chief developments took place in Great Britain. Slowly, little by little, it permeated the conquered people, so that, when the English were ready once more to put their own language to literary uses, they took both matter and manner from French works, basing and forming their own productions upon them. Complete ignorance of Anglo-Saxon poetry is no barrier to understanding

Chaucer, but to be ignorant of French mediæval poetry is to be entirely unacquainted with Chaucer's literary origins.

There are thus two necessary prefaces to English literature, and the French is more indispensable than the Anglo-Saxon to comprehension of its final form. It is therefore important to discover which of the most general characteristics of established French literature were such as by their novelty to impress English writers, and by their beauty to persuade them to imitation.[1]

(1) The one of these characteristics which is most widely found, and which is most thrown into relief by a study of Anglo-Saxon, is undoubtedly clarity. To turn from *Beowulf*, or even the *Battle of Maldon,* to the *Chanson de Roland* is to come out of darkness into light. The impression is received from all sides at once. It is an outcome of the subject, the way of telling the story, its spirit and the mind behind it, but above all and always it results from the difference between the two languages. That the old French authors wrote clearly is generally recognised, but it has been too much the fashion to see this gift as merely consequent on the analytical tendencies and logical aptitudes of their thought, and to make it a pretext for assigning prose to them as their province, and denying them the poetic faculty. Their clarity is not, however, purely abstract. It is a veritable light, shining in the dominant vowels, illuminating the best and only noteworthy verses of the troubadours. Some examples must be cited of the success often achieved by any poet who took happy advantage of the genius of the language.

In the old romances we read that,

> Bele Erembors a la fenestre au jor
> Sor ses genolz tient paile de color.[2]

or that,

> Bele Yolanz en chambre koie
> Sor ses genoux pailes desploie
> Coût un fil d'or, l'autre de soie.[3]

In the *Chanson de Roland* there is the following description of sunlight streaming upon an army.

[1] The analysis of these characteristics is taken from E. Legouis, *Défense de la poésie française à l'usage des lecteurs anglais* (London, 1912).

[2] Fair Erembor at her window in daylight
Holds a coloured silk stuff on her knees .

[3] Fair Yoland in her quiet bower
Unfolds silk stuffs on her knees,
Sewing now a thread of gold, now one of silk . .

Esclargiz est li vespres et li jurs;
Contre l'soleil reluisent cil adub (arms)
Osbert e helme i getent grand flambur,
E cil escut ki bien sunt peint a flurs,
E cil espiet, cil oret gonfanun.[1]

and this one of Durandal, Roland's sword:

E Durandal, cum ies clere et blanche
Cuntre soleil si reluis et reflambes.[2]

Chrestien de Troyes has dazzling passages, and there are the following two lines from Marie de France:

Fils d'or ne gette tel luur
Cum si chevel cuntre li jur.[3]

There is lively, splendid colour in these lines. After the Anglo-Saxon verses it is almost blinding. Yet itself pales if it be compared with more southern poetry, where profusion of sonorous vowels makes a red and yellow vividness. For the Englishmen who knew them, the verses of such as Bernard de Ventadour had even more colour than those in the *langue d'oïl:*

Tant ai mon cor plan de joja
Tot mes denatura;
Flors blanca, vermelh e bloja
Me sembla la froidura.[4]

The peculiarity of the *langue d'oïl* was less colour than sheer light, white light or the transparency of water flowing over rock, or of a pure fountain playing on a bed of fine sand. It is a question whether any language has ever been as well endowed as French with native sounds to suggest this clarity that has neither fire nor colour. Perhaps it is the surprising dominance of the *é* over the *a* and the *o*, those more obtrusive vowels of the south.

[1] The day has cleared up;
The arms shine in the sun;
Hauberk and helm throw forth bright flames,
And the shields finely painted with flowers,
And the spears, and the golden banners.

[2] Eh! Durandal, how clear and white thou art.
So bright dost thou blaze in the sun!

[3] No golden thread shines so bright
As her hair against daylight.

[4] So full of joy is my heart
That it changes all nature for me;
To me the very winter seems
A flower white, ruddy, and blue.

The word *cler* (*clear*), which expresses the sensation, is itself an admirable achievement, and its worth was so well understood by the old French poets that they made it the favourite of their vocabulary, and it gives atmosphere to their poems. The predilection was shared by Roland's singer, in whose epic it would be interesting to count the lines in which the word occurs, always placed so happily that it makes a picture:

> *Clere* est la lune, les esteiles flambient. . . .
> Trestat (passe) la noit, e apert la *clere* albe. . . .
> Contre le ciel en salt (saute) li fous (feu) tuz *clers*. . . .
> Parmi la bouche en salt forts li *clers* sancs.[1]

This whiteness is everywhere in the verses of Chrestien de Troyes, as well as in the old romances and pastorals:

> En un vergier, lez une fontenelle
> Dont clere est l'onde et blanche la gravele
> Siet fille a roi, sa main à sa maxele;
> En sospirant son doux ami rapele.[2]

It was from the perception of this light and the effort to reproduce it that the most beautiful verses of the English language, as renewed in the fourteenth century, were born. It is not only curious, but also highly significant, that the English poets adopted the word *clere* anew, and used it hardly less than their French predecessors and for like effects. Thus Chaucer, in his delicious address to the Virgin:

> Continue on us thy pitous eyen *clere*.

And he begins his most lyrical song with the line:

> Hyd, Absolon, thy gilte tresses *clere*.

He says of the bells hanging on the monk's bridle that they "ginglen clere," and everywhere, with this word and many others having the same effect, he gives the impression of a changed atmosphere, one which is more luminous and happier, which, in a word, is French.

[1] [illegible]

[2] In an orchard, near a springlet
Whose water is clear and gravel white,
Is a king's daughter sitting, with her hand to her chin;
Sighing she calls her sweet love back.

(2) It would certainly be wrong to attribute this omnipresent clarity to language only. The aptitude of the writers to seize a luminous detail is as manifest as that of the language to express it and give it value. Something in their taste for well-lit pictures was the outcome of their joy in life, their pleasure in blue sky and sunlight. They never missed an opportunity to shed light upon a picture. *Roland,* which is a song of disaster, is a series of brilliant touches. Clear light falls from the heavens by day and by night. It streams over armies ready to commit slaughter. Colour bursts upon the "banners, white, blue and vermilion" (*gonfanons blancs et blois et vermeils*). Nothing is more luminous than Roland's portrait: with clear and laughing face (*le vis cler et riant*), ready for the fight, mounted on Veillantif and with his arms in good state, he whirls the handle of his lance which points skywards, and has streaming from its end a pure white pennon, with a golden fringe which strikes the hero's hands. There is no bright spot so small that the poet does not notice and acclaim it. He sees a warrior's "spurs of fine gold," another's "golden and beflowered shield," the gems "flashing" upon the helmet of the emir, whose white beard is like "blossom," "blossom in April," or "the blossom of a thorn." He has picked up the point of light which the teeth of the Ethiopians make in their black faces:

Ne n'unt de blanc ne mais que sul les denz.[1]

He admires the sparkle of the beaten metal of armour. Even horrors take on a sort of beauty for him. The mounted warriors wade, up to their bodies, in "vermilion blood" (*en sanc vermeil*). When a hard blow had been dealt, "vermilion blood gushes forth up to the arms" (*li sancs vermeilz en volat jusqu'as braz*). The "clear" blood (*tout cler*) of the dying Oliver springs radiant (*raiet*) out of his body. Thus dazzling pictures are made of the most terrible wounds. The iron of a lance, transfixing a body, hangs it with brilliant pennons:

El cors li met tote l'enseigne bloie.[2]

And we pass continually from this exterior luminosity to the sunshine of the heart which gives light from within. There is close association between the ideas of shadow and of evil. The

[1] No whiteness have they, save on their teeth.
[2] Thrusts the whole blue standard through his body.

devils inhabit the land of Valnaire (Black Valley), where all the stones are black and the sun never shines. A gloomy and sad countenance is an index of crime, as in the Saracen Abisme:

> Plus fel (cruel) de lui n'out en sa cumpaignie. . . .
> Unkes nul hume ne l'vit juer ni rire.[1]

On the other hand, every one of the righteous has gaiety for his sign, and turns, like Charles, his face to the rising sun:

> Turnet sun vis vers le soleil levant.[2]

The games of the French are gay and played in the open air, "beneath a pine, beside an eglantine." They sit on "white silk stuffs." There is noisy, frivolous merriment among them. Ganelon says of Roland that "for a single hare he winds his horn all day":

> *Pur un sul lievre vait tut le jur cornant.*[3]

Archbishop Turpin's exuberant merriment and his contempt for the monk who spends his time praying rule out every idea of a lugubrious, forbidding religion. Even the love of fighting is no gloomy appetite for slaughter. It is love of movement, noise, colour and glory. At the end of their life of warfare the fighters have a glimpse of the paradise where they will rest "among holy flowers" (*en saintes fleurs*), "crowned and decked with flowers" (*couronnés et fleuris*).

It is true that these men know sorrow:

> Mult ad apris ki bien conoist ahan (pain).[4]

These French shed tears easily. They weep and they swoon as Beowulf did not. Just because they get so much joy out of life, they have cause to regret it. They complain, too, of exile from their country:

> Tere de France, mult estes dulz païs.[5]

Friend mourns friend. Roland mourns Oliver with impassioned tenderness. Words fail the Beautiful Aude when she learns the death of Roland, and she can but die also. Generally,

[1] No feller than he was in his company,
No one ever saw him play or laugh
[2] Turns his face towards the rising sun
[3] For a single hare blows his horn the livelong day.
[4] He has learnt much who knows grief
[5] Land of France, thou art a most sweet country

however, the men are men of action. Never, like the Anglo-Saxon heroes, do they give the impression that the spring of life, which is love thereof, is broken. Soon they leave their mourning and make another beginning, once more "brush forward on their coursing steeds":

Brochent avant sur leurs destriers courants.

Such was the great revelation of early French literature to the Anglo-Saxons. It was the contribution which a race in love with light and life, believing itself God's people, made to a race languishing not indeed for lack of heroism, but for lack of clear light overhead and of faith in itself and the future. Beowulf, a victor, spoke as he left the earth words full of the Christian consciousness of the nothingness of earthly things. The conquered Byrhtnoth died proudly, but without a hope for his country.

The poets of Anglia had called sinister landscapes and lugubrious scenes into being with a strength of characterisation and atmospheric truth before which the corresponding passages of the French trouvères sink to insignificance, for instance the attempts of the author of *Roland* to describe the fearful portents which announce the death of his hero. In his cold and unimpressive catalogue of horrors, he uses words too slight for the images they would convey. But when, at Hastings, a primitive fragment of verse rings out in Taillefer's song, movement, gaiety and light enter English literature. Half the gifts and aptitudes of English poetry have then their beginning. Taine's theory that all English poetry derives from Anglo-Saxon and all English prose from Franco-Norman is therefore inaccurate. Taine sees in old French poetry only the elements which degenerate to "gossip and platitude." It is made up, for him, of dull stories, mere statements of fact which "never wait for poetry and painting." He even says of the poet of *Roland* that there is "no splendour and no colour" in his story. It is a strange opinion for one who had read *Beowulf* immediately before *Roland*, a poem truly all of gloom before one woven of clarity. Taine's estimate can only be explained by supposing that he was unconsciously under a Romantic influence which caused him to confuse poetry with sadness and murkiness, prose with clarity and lightness of heart. He reserves the word poetic too exclusively for happenings during a dark

night in which nothing is heard distinctly; only the tramping of feet and cries of rage or pain. To follow him closely would be to reject all the poetry of southern countries, that of Italy and even that of Greece, as no more than measured prose in comparison with the sombre and often formless effusions of the Germanic and Scandinavian tribes.

(3) Taine is, however, right when he adds that the style of *Roland* is "bare, without images." This bareness is one of the most marked features of old French poetry To turn to it from the poems of the Anglo-Saxons is to receive, among other general impressions, that of having left violence for calm. To an ear still a little deafened by the Anglo-Saxon clamour, the voice which speaks quietly or sings in a gentle undertone at first seems weak. Some time is needed before the charm of softer, more modulated tones can be savoured. The surcharged, ejaculatory rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon poetry gives an appearance of singular poverty to a language which is really new, in which words have as yet no past and figures and periphrases have still to be born.

From the time at which it is first known, Anglo-Saxon is a traditional language with a style already inclining to decadence. It possesses the accumulated wealth of a long life. Its remoteness *from the object or idea it expresses is seen in the very* sumptuosity of the decoration. (The literary ornaments are so many veils, which prevent contact with things rarely denoted by *their simple name.)* The French of the eleventh century, on the other hand, starts naked as it was born, without heirlooms or the pomp of inherited rhetoric. It may be said to have created its splendour out of nothing, only by its own radiance. It is slight as a river at its source, transparent as the water which gushes from a rock, but vital as that which has space and the future before it. It takes its words straight from the vulgar tongue, uses only the same terms as everyday prose. It has no solemn or strange periphrases with which to make its effects. All it can do is exactly to choose the best of the common words, and to combine them in harmonious and varied groups. To move and captivate, it must have facts, the interest of a story, or else, for more lyrical compositions, the naked beauty of feeling and idea. It is by these signs that the *infancy is recognised of a literature* which may one day have great fortunes and make a tradition, but which has as yet no heritage to help or hamper it.

The same is true of the future poetic language of England. It made hay of all its former opulence. But after the long winter which ensued on the Norman Conquest, it had a season of renewal. It sprang again to life, bereft, stripped naked, prosaic, pedestrian, glued to facts, careful only for the accuracy after which it long tried vainly, yet with honest concentration on this modest aim. And when, at the advent of Chaucer, the language of English poetry had completed its initiation, the fine slightness and bareness of its framework were still distinctly perceptible beneath the poet's graceful images and his movement, his sprightliness and his varied colours. Poetic language had begun again at the very beginning in order to make itself what it was, and what it still is.

(4) A merit of old French poetry from which the English reaped abundant advantage has still to be noticed. The French trouvères have, not without reason, been reproached for monotony and long-windedness. But to turn to them from the scops is to be struck, perhaps equally, by the almost endless variety of their themes and their moods and by the large number of the works in which they have resisted the temptation to gossip, and successfully found for their conceptions an artistic frame, sometimes bare and severe, sometimes prettily decorated, but proportionate to their matter, so that subject and form are happily balanced.

After reading the chief Anglo-Saxon works, it is easy to imagine the surprise with which some Englishmen gradually learnt to know the fertile and artistic literary productions of their conquerors. One has but to take the omnipresent, uniform alliterative line, which magnified all subjects alike, whether great or small, gave them all the same lyrical and epic tone, and to place it beside these varied French verses, ranging from the alexandrine to the monosyllabic line, beside their endless combinations of assonances and rhymes, which between the two extremes of the long *laisses* of the *chansons de geste* and the short, sparkling stanzas of the songs, run through the whole gamut of strophes, and are able, with their odd and even rhythms, to reproduce every step and gait, to translate the finest shades of feeling, from heroism to impertinent frivolity.

There are, for instance, French lives of the saints, primitive poems, of which the *Life of Saint Elexis* is the noblest that remains. To whosoever has read some of the amorphous, tor-

mented hagiology sung by the Anglo-Saxons, it is a surprise to come upon the calm stanzas on one assonance of *Saint Alexis.* From the first, they give the impression that a new world has been entered, in which grave and deep religious feeling is so allied to the simplest and surest art that the result can only be called perfection. Every part of the story, every corner of the picture, is, without effort, enclosed in a stanza. The story proceeds without hurry or jar. Emotion seems to be evoked not by the words, but by the details, that is the facts, which are presented without emphasis, in an order so luminous that it has the effect of the inevitable.

In *Roland* it is the dash which is admirable. The long *laisses,* the chained assonances of decasyllables, succeed each other, as do the charges of the Frankish and Saracen knights in the interminable fight. If after each there is a pause, the next starts with the same gait and covers another stage. The assonance constitutes the uniformity in the lines of the *laisse,* so much alike that they are a distinct and coherent group, but the association is freer than that effected by rhyme, and each line retains an undefinable but sufficient individuality. Nothing could be more alert and ongoing than these disciplined masses which "brush forward on their coursing steeds," moved by one impulse, lit up, here and there, by the sonorous clarity of the syllables—"Halte-clère, Joyeuse"—as by the brandished swords of galloping horsemen.

The heroic age and the great *chansons de geste,* in which the *laisses,* the chained assonances, lend themselves to grandiose expression, as in the description of the fight between Roland and Oliver (Gérard de Vienne), or to metrical eloquence, as in Charlemagne's apostrophe of his barons (Aimeri de Narbonne), was succeeded by the age of romances, which was neither free from convention nor innocent of diffuseness and platitudes, but which made its own contribution of new graces. After the decasyllabic or alexandrine line came the line of eight syllables, and the distich superseded the *laisse,* or stanza. Everything speaks of smaller ambitions, less width and space. It is a decline to the petty, to a prettiness, sometimes exquisite, which attains to a perfection of its own in many passages of Chrestien de Troyes' considerable works, in the short lays of Marie de France and in the first half of the *Roman de la Rose.* But the same verse-form lent itself well to satire, to the fable and the fabliau, and with

its serried rhymes was a good medium for Renart's ironies, for the highly flavoured stories of conjugal misadventure, and for Jean de Meung's encyclopædic satire.

Always there were, not indeed below, but round about these different works, countless songs, romances and *pastourelles*, at first and at their most beautiful in free verse and varied rhythms but passing, gradually, to a formal lyricism, increasingly stereotyped in metre and sentiment. Although the surviving examples of these old romances are all too few, there are enough of them to show that they had the very qualities which have been denied or too grudgingly allowed to the old French poets. A strangeness, together with the vagueness of the refrains, refutes the charge of lack of mystery, excess of dry light and exaggerated regularity. Sometimes there is the charm of delicious, fanciful unreason (*Volez vos que je vous chante?*), or, in a few stanzas, an emotional drama of inexhaustible melancholy (*Gaiète et Orior*). More often, in the *Reverdis*, the *jeu-partis*, the tensons, the rondels, the *ballettes*, there are rhythms light as a bird, so winged and so singing that as one reads them one hears a tune:

Por coi me bat mes maris
Laisette! [1]

Every verse-form, every arrangement of rhymes and every stanza afterwards used in English poetry is to be found here in seed or in flower. Henceforth English, like French, poetry had a variety of forms proportionate to its variety of subjects.

It should be added that the change in the verse was not merely exterior. Its inner character was from this time modified. The principal accent came to fall where it fell in French, before the cesura and on the rhyme. The culminating points became the end of the line and the end of the hemistich. The line rose towards its rhyme, instead of falling, as formerly, from the initial alliterations. The pleasure of echoing and recalling sounds gave to vowels an importance in the line at least equal to that of consonants. Words, even Germanic words, were for long severely constrained in order that they might be bent to the exigencies of a foreign rhythm not made and hardly fitted for them. Even to-day the traces of this struggle have barely disappeared. French poetry captivated the Anglo-Saxons to such a point that it changed

[1] Why does my husband beat me, alack the day!

their ear, and made them delight in accents recurring at fixed intervals and similar and echoing terminations—in syllabism, measure and rhyme.

2. *Anglo-Norman Literature.*[1]—It was essential to recall the chief characteristics of French mediæval literature, in general, without limitations of time or province, because the whole of this literature was, as long as it lasted, known and loved by the Normans, and much of it was gradually translated or imitated by the English. Three centuries after the Conquest, the æsthetic character which we have noticed in this literature reappeared, almost in its entirety and with hardly any admixture, in Chaucer's English works. It behoves us now, however, exactly to determine the special contribution of the Normans to old French literature. To have confined ourselves to what they alone produced would have been manifest error, for the works which had most influence on early English poetry—the larger part of the chivalrous romances, the great allegories, the *Roman de Renart*, the fabliaux, the free and the formal lyrics—are of continental origin. Their particular contribution, and especially that of the Anglo-Normans, must, none the less, be distinguished and characterised, in order to understand the minds of the Conquerors, that is of the people whose literary tastes and needs were to make the most direct impression on the unified nation which sprang of their fusion with the vanquished.

The Norman element is, before the Conquest, difficult to unravel from the mass of French literature. What is certain is that the Normans had already severed every tie with the language and poetry of the Scandia whence they emanated. They may have kept the adventurous and warlike character of their Scandinavian ancestors, but marriages, the influence of their new surroundings and their conversion to Christianity had gallicised them swiftly and fundamentally. From the eleventh century onwards, Normandy had a high repute for clerical science and piety, solid orthodoxy, and the beauty of her religious buildings which are intermediate between the Romanesque and the Gothic. Rouen

[1] G. Lanson, *Histoire de la Littérature française*, Parts I. and II.; Gaston Paris, *Littérature française au Moyen âge*, *La Poésie du Moyen âge* (2 series), *Poèmes et Légendes du Moyen âge;* J. J Jusserand, *Histoire littéraire du Peuple anglais*, Book II. chaps. ii and iii.; W. H. Schofield, *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer*, chap. iii (excellent bibliography). J. Vising, *Anglo-Norman Language and Literature.* Oxford Univ. Press., 1923.

was a lettered, artistic and religious capital city in which mystery-plays were already being performed. The Normans did more than any other people to propagate the cult of the Virgin, and to introduce the feast of the Immaculate Conception which was long forbidden by the Church. In spite of this, their ties with Rome were very close; their clergy were, on the whole, orthodox and rational. In the matter of poetry, they found the epic ready-made when they settled in France. "They hardly seem," says Gaston Paris, "to have taken a personal part in the epic movement which was going on around them." But they had a passion for this kind of poetry, for instance for the *Chanson de Roland*, which is not theirs but which they preserved, and whence some primitive fragment is said to have been sung by Taillefer before the army at Hastings. Their highest claim to be poets would be found in the *Vie de Saint Alexis* by Tedbald de Vernon, if the origin of this work were certain.

They landed on English soil, and for more than a century their language showed no essential difference from French. The Norman and Angevin kings remained intellectually continental and French until they lost Normandy and Anjou in 1204. Many of the best French writers of the time lived at their court; many of the principal works of the twelfth century were composed there. The reign of Henry II. (1154-99) marks the zenith of this literary glory.

Already, however, it is possible to see that the trouvères born in Great Britain, or called thither from the Continent, were under a special influence. Public taste dictated the matter and the form of their writings unless these had a political inspiration. They are nearly all chroniclers, by their subjects and their style. This is true of Gaimar with his *Lestoire des Engles*, Wace with his *Roman de Brut* (Brutus) and *Roman de Rou* (Rollo), Benoît de Sainte-More with his *Lestoire e la généalogie des dux qui unt esté par ordre en Normendie*, his *Roman de Troie*, and his romance of *Æneas*, Eustace or Thomas de Kent with his *Alexander*, Garnier de Pont Saint Maxence with his *Vie Saint Thomas le Martir*.

Many of Taine's reproaches, which are too general because he extended them to all French poetry, would be better founded if he had limited their application to the Anglo-Normans. On the whole, Anglo-Norman verse does not deserve to be called

very poetic. Almost all the verse certainly known to have been written by an Anglo-Norman poet, or a French poet at the Anglo-Norman court, has an indisputably prosaic character. It falls short in sensibility, in enthusiasm, in the search for beauty. It is made up, for the most part, of versified chronicles and didactic treatises. The Anglo-Normans were dominated either by intellectual curiosity or by utilitarianism. The epical and lyrical metres of their predecessors were almost exclusively succeeded by an octosyllabic line, which uses rhythm and rhyme only to aid memory, and since to the constraint of verse it adds none of its rightful pleasures, it often awakens regret for prose.

The conquest of England inspired the trouvères not with epics after the style of *Roland*, but with metrical chronicles. The battle of Hastings in the *Roman de Rou* has an almost equally surprising effect if it be read after the description of the fight at Maldon, in which Byrhtnoth died, or after that of the battle of Roncesvalles where Roland met his death. The legendary glory of Roland and the epic heroism of Byrhtnoth alike are gone. Wace's very long story is copious and well-informed history and nothing more. It states the happenings in the camp from hour to hour, from the eve to the morrow, reproduces the very words of the combatants, records the tactics of the two leaders, and describes the details of their armour, and the most trifling incidents of the battle. There is certainly no lack of heroic motifs, for instance the successive refusal of Raoul de Conches and of Walter Giffart to bear the duke's standard, because they wish to fight themselves. There is lively presentment of the tumult of the battle—"Moult oissiez graisles sonner." But there is little poetry. The narrator may love fine swordplay and the din of the *mêlée*, but he no more loses his head than Froissart in the story of Crécy. He knows how to classify the enormous mass of information he has collected and to sift evidence. Throughout, his octosyllabic couplet trots forward at an even pace, and he holds the reins with the steadiest hand.

Wace's characteristics recur, more or less, in all the Anglo-Norman poems of the great period. There is a less contrast, but one still striking, between the purely French romances of Chrestien de Troyes and those of Benoît de Sainte-More who lived at the court of Henry II. Chrestien turns to romantic and picturesque use all the historical remains in the legends which

are his material. His aim is to please by strangeness of adventures and graces of style. But Benoît, who is first of all a chronicler, gives a pseudo-historical air even to his inventions. He is spirited but not poetic.

Many of these Anglo-Norman writings are, for that matter, real history, and even such of them as are fabulous or legendary pretend to truth. The aim of several is to satisfy the ingenuous curiosity of readers who wished to know foreign nations, to explore the present and the past. Other poems, of yet more positive design, attempt to weld together the legends scattered throughout the land of Great Britain, and thus to facilitate the fusion of its conflicting races. Their authors would have rallied, on English soil, divergent hostile patriotisms, united Britons, Angles and Normans in the praises of the country they all inhabited, in which all that was and had been was equally dear. The great island had never received such homage as was tendered it in the *Brut* (Munich MS.). Praise, characteristic of the author's practical mind, runs through these verses in which the country is reviewed as by a conscientious geographer: its orography and hydrography, its mineral and agricultural wealth, the history of its population—all pass, in good order, before one whose admiration never modifies his cool judgment. And nothing is more striking than the smiling aspect, the plenty, this alert observer discovers in the country which Anglo-Saxon poetry had wrapped in fog and horror. It is almost comfortable already. The surrounding sea is no longer "the path of the storm," but the wide, convenient highroad of an easy foreign trade.

Anglo-Norman is thus distinguished from French literature by a more marked didactic and utilitarian tendency, and by a weakened æsthetic character. This is not surprising if it be remembered that its first mission, on entering a country which had relapsed to ignorance and was populated by enemy races, was to instruct and to unify. Inevitably the native purity of the French language was very soon adulterated in an island in which it was cut off from its roots among the people. The mother-tongue of the settlers in a foreign land is always thus corrupted or stiffened. It becomes a written, bookish language, preserved with effort and artificially, or, as a spoken tongue, it is contaminated by contact with speech which differs from it profoundly, and suffers from the outset an accretion of many words disfigured

by their passage through foreign lips. Thus foreign geographical terms, and expressions referring to local customs which survived the Conquest, adhered to Norman-French. The momentary brilliance of Anglo-Norman letters was, therefore, mainly due to the continental writers attracted to the court of the kings of England, and literature was kept alive among the Anglo-Normans, properly so called, only in so far as it was useful. As for the English who practised writing in the language of the Conquerors, they could not but aggravate the artificial or incorrect character of this literature in a tongue which was not their own.

The consciousness of these inevitable lapses inclined the more intelligent of Anglo-Norman writers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to turn to Latin.[1] It is true that Latin was then attracting a large number of clerks and literates throughout Europe, who were thus lost to the cause of progress in the vulgar tongues. But this loss was felt in Great Britain more than anywhere else, and literature there may be said to have been beheaded—it lost its leaders—for the sake of Latin, the only common language in a country where Babel reigned. It was not only the clerks who wrote Latin, nor did they confine its use to religious treatises. It was employed in this age in works of every kind, serious and frivolous, learned and popular, many of which greatly surpassed the writings in the English of the conquered or the French of the conquerors. William de Jumièges' *History of William I.*, Ordericus Vitalis' *Ecclesiastical History*, William of Malmesbury's *Chronicle of the Kings of England*, and Henry of Huntingdon's *Annals*, are the principal monuments of the serious part of this literature in Latin,[2] and of the fantastic, mystifying works, the best known is Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Britons*. The best examples of the works apparently more frivolous, but also more truly literature, are the letters and stories of Giraldus Cambrensis, the Latin jests and miscellaneous profanities of Walter Map, and Nigel Wireker's *Speculum Stultorum* or Comic Adventures of the Ass Brunellus.

From what has been said, it follows that the study of literary monuments of the time should extend from French to Latin, if

[1] J. J. Jusserand, *Histoire littéraire*, etc., Book II. chap iii.; W H Schofield, *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer*, chap ii

[2] J. Gairdner, *Early Chroniclers of Europe* (1879); H. Morley, *English Writers*, vol. iii.

all and the highest intellectual activity of the inhabitants of Britain after the Norman invasion is to be understood. If the æsthetic elements which were to fashion renascent English literature are to be analysed, it is necessary to go further, to study not only the Latin of England, but also all the Latin, whatever its origin, of the religious offices which sounded week by week in the ears of the faithful, and had plainly an influence on the English verse-form in process of evolution.[1] When mediæval Latin poets finally gave up attempting to reproduce the prosody of antiquity, when they wrote Latin verses with a purely accentual rhythm, and took advantage of the numerous similar endings of words in Latin to enrich their productions with sonorous rhymes, they provided the vernacular poets with models of versification. It was, in fact, they who first fully realised the resources of the new versification, and fully exploited its potentialities for the solemn and the comic. In no language was there for a long time anything to match the perfection of the hymns of the Church which were repeated throughout Christendom, Jacopone's *Stabat Mater* or Celano's *Dies Irae*. Nor was there anything to equal, for comic effect, the sonorous, single-rhymed quatrains of the *Goliards,* or unfrocked clerks, attributed to Walter Map:

Meum est propositum in taberna mori:
Vinum sit appositum morientis ori,
Ut dicant, cum venerint, angelorum chori:
Deus sit propitius huic potatori.

The Latin verses, which the faithful conned in church or drinkers trolled in the taverns, could exercise a considerable influence on English poetry from the time when the Anglo-Saxon line was finally abandoned, and new paths were explored for a metre which should be at once accentual and rhymed. The Anglo-Saxons had been able to translate much Latin quantitative verse without modifying their own prosody, for there was no common measure between the two verse-forms. But from this time Latin rhymed verse was allied with French verse to undermine and overthrow the Anglo-Saxon form. English poetry was to aim henceforth, although vainly for many generations, at analogous effects of high lyricism, jollity and swing.

Before dealing with poetry in English, we must mention

[1] G. Saintsbury, *History of English Prosody*, vol. i.; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. i. chap. xviii.

another force which had important and lasting influence on it, and reached it first through the French and Latin of the conquerors. There is in Anglo-Norman literature, on the whole so practical and prosaic, one region in which sentiment and the marvellous are paramount. They exist, it is true, only in the subjects, and do not affect the even calm of the writers' tones. Yet they are there whenever a chronicler, pursuing his curious search for stories, has heard and wishes to repeat some Celtic legend.[1] It must continually have happened that the Normans became aware of the tales which had been traditional among the Britons around them since their glorious days and were the *depository of their hope of revenge, and also of the fair dreams* of adventure and love by which their imaginations were charmed. If some of these poems reached England from Armorica, through t[illegible] hers which p[illegible]-Normans. [illegible] *mysterious* and indeterminate, now exercised for the first time? Probably not. In Anglo-Saxon times the neighbourhood of the vanquished Britons had already had its effect. History no longer admits that the Britons suffered mass extermination at the hands of their Germanic conquerors, but teaches that as well as the Irish, untouched within their island, and the still independent Britons of the western and northern mountains, there were many survivors of this race in the centre and the south who were merged in the conquering people. We have seen that the conversion of the Angles to Christianity was the work of the Church of Ireland, and that Bede, though an out-and-out Romanist, emanated from a monastery founded by Celts and animated by their spirit. Anglo-Saxon hagiography is partly of Celtic inspiration, and there is a great resemblance between the lives of the Irish Saint Brendan and those of the Anglo-Saxon saints Cuthbert and Guthlac. Even the half-pagan poetry of the Anglo-Saxons is often much akin to what is nowadays called Celtic mystery and strangeness. The romance of *Beowulf* opens with a prologue on the mysterious origin of the hero which is singularly like the story in the British cyle of the apparition of Arthur. However, on the one hand, the defeat of the Church of Ireland by the Church of Rome, and, on the other, the exclusive, little inquisitive character of the

[1] G. Saintsbury, *Flourishing of Romance and Rise of Allegory* (1897).

rule, enters into conflict with the Roman emperor, triumphs over him, and makes the Romans his slaves. Ever victorious, he lives until the end of the seventh century.

In spite of the protests of several clerks, Gerald de Barri among others, Geoffrey's fables were accepted. They were assimilated first by the Normans and then by the Anglo-Saxons. Both peoples were presently enthusiastic for the British hero, their racial enemy, and adopted him as a glorious ancestor. The illusion was singular, but it had its part in weakening racial hatred and giving birth to English patriotism.

Geoffrey Gaimar, a mediocre Norman trouvère, was the first to turn this story into French verse. He shows Arthur, after his victories, summoning a meeting of the kings at Caerleon—the City of the Legions—and there crowned in splendour, and thus he gives the first suggestion for the legend of the Round Table. Other Celtic legends gathered about the early nucleus. Marie de France contributed to them in lays written at the court of Henry II. Allowing for the part of Chrestien de Troyes, the conclusion is that the British cycle was evolved principally the Anglo-Normans, and that Walter Map, who was lf-Norman and half-Welsh, presumably welded together the thurian legend and the legend of the Holy Grail. He is cred- d with giving the cycle its religious and moral character, in t he represented Guinevere, Arthur's wife, as an adulteress, l her lover, Lancelot, as unworthy, by his sin, to accomplish quest of the Holy Grail, which was reserved for his son, ahad. The *Queste del Saint Graal, Lancelot du Lac* and *Mort rthur* are attributed to Walter Map.

The powerful imaginative leaven of this story, the most tiful and varied of all those in the minds of the English they again began to write, must not be forgotten. It was ry all the more stimulating to them because it was set in their country, and they believed it to be national.

. *English Literature from 1066 to 1350.*[1] *Changes in the uage.*—Small though the æsthetic value of Anglo-Norman ture may be, it is great in comparison with that of the con- orary literature in English, labouring, as this did, under the

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Anglo-Saxons, seem to have put very strict limits to their poetic debt to the Britons.

All this was changed at the coming of the Normans. For the first time, the proscribed Saxons felt themselves the brothers of the Welsh whom they had formerly despised and persecuted. The Normans, meanwhile, were the first to effect a fusion between these races, and they did it by violence. In the reign of Henry I. they made a cruel and bloodthirsty conquest of Wales, hitherto independent. For two centuries this subjugation was nothing like final, but the contact, so early established by measures of force, made the Anglo-Normans curious about their adversaries. Hence works were written which at first were hardly literary in themselves, but which were important for the echo which they found in French, and even more in English, literature.

The first of these works in date, and the one most fruitful of consequences, was the Latin *History of the Britons* which Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote before 1147, and dedicated to the son of Henry I. The author had been brought up in a Benedictine monastery near Monmouth in Wales, of which place he was archdeacon when he wrote his book. He poses as a truthful chronicler, and claims to translate an old and unknown British book. He had, in fact, no precursors, save Gildas (sixth century), who does not mention Arthur, and Nennius (tenth century), who says very little about him. Moreover, exploration of the Celtic literatures has yielded nothing except what is later than Geoffrey and imitated from him.

Thus Geoffrey is, in large part, the creator of the Arthurian legend. His book is a work of imagination in disguise, and it is impossible to say to what extent tradition helped him. But it was certainly with an historian's gravity that he wrote out his fables.

Following Nennius so far, he makes Brutus, the father of the Britons, into the great-grandson of Æneas, who came to Britain and there founded Troynovant, or New Troy, afterwards called London.

But the most curious parts of his story are those which concern Arthur, represented as the heroic defender of the Britons, and Merlin, whose prophecies he collects. Arthur appears as the conqueror of the Anglo-Saxons, the Picts and the Scots. He brings Ireland, Iceland, Scandinavia and Gaul under his imperial

rule, enters into conflict with the Roman emperor, triumphs over him, and makes the Romans his slaves. Ever victorious, he lives until the end of the seventh century.

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3. *English Literature from 1066 to 1350.*[1] *Changes in the Language.*—Small though the æsthetic value of Anglo-Norman literature may be, it is great in comparison with that of the contemporary literature in English, labouring, as this did, under the

[1] J. J. Jusserand, *Hist. litt.*, etc., Book II. chap. iv.; W. H Schofield, *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer;* John Edwin Wells, *Manual of the Writings in Middle English* (with Supplements, Connecticut Academy, 1916); A. S. Cook, *A Literary Middle English Reader* (Boston).

disadvantages of a despised language, loss of tradition and lack of culture. It was a literature written by half-literate men for an ignorant people. The three centuries after the Norman Conquest produced writings which show the gradual transformations undergone by the old language, and are therefore full of interest for the philologist, but which offer hardly anything to the amateur of literature. He may be touched by the very awkwardness of these attempts at literary composition, but he esteems them merely as rude translations, inharmonious verses which hesitate between alliterative rhythm and the cadence of the rhymed line, and alternately obey and ignore the laws of syllabism. All this licence would have horrified the scops and it gave the trouvères good matter for ridicule.

The reconstruction was slow, but the ruin of Anglo-Saxon rhetoric was prompt, almost, indeed, instantaneous. It had two principal causes, the repeated efforts of English writers to translate the works of French poets, often to translate them literally, and the wide and deep changes swiftly wrought in the speech of the vanquished people by their lack of culture and by the contaminating influence of the language of the conquerors.

Several modifying processes affected Anglo-Saxon.[1] The vocabulary suffered the rapid and final loss of a considerable number of words, of nearly all those proper to the old poetic style, and it received, in exchange, French words which penetrated it slowly and gradually. By degrees English came to borrow the words which denoted the customs and ideas imported from Normandy—the learned terms of warfare, hunting and falconry, words which referred to chivalry, scientific and legal language, courtly speech, abstract and technical terms and those connected with art and luxury. Thus was constituted the modern English language, in which words of French origin or words based, in imitation of French, on Latin or Greek, are much more numerous than Germanic words, although these, in current speech and frequency of use, are to the others in the average ratio of ten to one.

At the same time, there was a modification of the form and the pronunciation of such Anglo-Saxon words as subsisted.

[1] *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. i, chap. iii, by Henry Bradley ("Changes in the Language to the Days of Chaucer"); H. Bradley, *The Making of English* (1904); O. Jespersen, *Growth and Structure of the English Language* (1905); H. C. Wyld, *The Historical Study of the Mother Tongue* (London, 1906).

Most often they were contracted: unprotected by any culture and assailed by deforming foreign attempts to pronounce them, they tended to keep only their essential, that is their accentuated, syllable. They were like a besieged fort, holding only the central tower, abandoning the outer works. There resulted an increase of the monosyllables which are so numerous in modern English.

Degradation overtook, in particular, the terminations in use among the Anglo-Saxons. The Norman Conquest affected them in two ways: first, it suppressed or weakened many of them, and thus accelerated the progress of the English language to its present analytical state, in which relations previously indicated by inflections are shown by distinct words; secondly, it helped to determine the choice for survival of certain inflections out of the number of those customary among the several peoples of Anglia, Mercia and Wessex, whose differences were reproduced in the chief Middle English dialects, those of the north, the centre and the south. While endings of words were indeterminate and at rivalry, the language of the conquerors sometimes had the additional weight which made it the arbiter of victory among them. This is the best explanation of the extension to all declensions of the plural in *es* or *s*, at first used only in one of the declensions of the noun.

French grammar contributed several of its uses. Anglo-Saxon formed the comparative and superlative of adjectives by inflection, but French introduced the use of the adverb also, so that, while the Germanic form was retained for monosyllables, mostly of Saxon root, the analytical form came to prevail for polysyllables, which were mainly derived from the French. Similarly, possession, formerly expressed by the genitive case, was expressed henceforth either by the genitive ending or by a preposition.

Anglo-Saxon, as a whole, was gradually simplified to modern English, a language of singularly few grammatical complications. Genders, arising out of the form of words or obscure and forgotten traditions, needed too delicate treatment to allow them to remain intact in a country of mixed population, and they were logically distributed according to sex, the neuter being reserved for all words in which there is no idea of sex. Only vestiges of the old grammar were left—the few present irregularities of the verb and the noun, and the genitive case, the only one which has

forth English reigned alone: in 1350 it took the place of French as the language of the schools: in 1362 it became that of the law-courts: and in 1399 it was used in parliament for the first time by Henry IV. In the same period prosody, which for long had wavered between one and the other of the two traditions, attained to perfect balance with Chaucer, who combined respect for the native tones of his fellow-countrymen with obedience to the essential laws of French versification. Whatever be the individual merits of the poets who preceded Chaucer, they do no more than mark the steps to that honourable place where he is enthroned as the first great metrical writer of his country.

4. *Literature in English. The Religious Writers.*—A hundred years of complete silence followed the Norman Conquest, and when a few writings in the native language reappeared towards the end of the twelfth century, they were mainly works of piety. To a disinherited people, no longer able to read, the essential Word, which helps man to work out his salvation, had to be carried first. Homilies, sermons in prose and in verse, translation of the Psalms or parts of the Bible, rules for a devout life, lives of the saints and prayers—these fill the pages which form the mass of what may be called English literature until about the middle of the fourteenth century. They are at first almost the whole of this literature, and they are its predominant part until this period ends. Inevitably, their only local element is language. As regards their matter, they are transcriptions, often literal, from Latin or French. If the passage of generations somewhat modified their religious sentiment, these were changes which affected all Europe, and sprang not from conditions in England, but from the widespread fluctuations of piety in the Middle Ages. The asceticism of cloisters, the growing tenderness which mingled with the devotion to the Virgin Mary, and the exaltation which was imbued with chivalry and mysticism, were reflected, in turn, in these English works.

Whenever they are specifically English, they owe it to the very popular character of their public. The problem was to gain the ear of an oppressed, poor and ignorant people, and more than elsewhere it was therefore necessary to use a very simple language and to multiply explanations and concrete details. Sometimes, also, the choice of the subject and the mood of the story was determined by a gentle pity for the miserable state of the

survived. The article and the adjective became invariable. Pronouns and auxiliaries were introduced to mark in the verb persons and tenses which had been expressed by inflections.

Thus a regular syntax, in which inversion and ellipses were only exceptionally allowable, was introduced. The poetic language lost closeness, freedom, and some elements of the picturesque, but the language as a whole gained lucidity and precision.

The final result of these transformations was not felt until the sixteenth century. In the meanwhile inflections kept a semblance of life, the varied, sonorous vowels first giving place to a uniform *e*, often arbitrarily used, which was perceptible to the ear at the beginning of the period in question, but was swiftly tending to purely orthographic existence. Philologists give the name of Middle English to the language of this long period of transition.

We are not here concerned to describe the slow and deep-reaching evolution in detail, and must be content with a mere sketch, instead of a complete picture. At first, French and English naturally kept separate. The conquerors spoke French, the vanquished Anglo-Saxon, which lost the dignity of an official and of a literary language. French became the language of the court, the schools and the law-courts, and, alternately with Latin, of the Church and of science. Its use spread among the burghers and among the landed gentry, who were largely Norman. It was only when they found themselves confined to Great Britain, after the loss of Normandy by John Lackland in 1204, that the conquerors began to pay any attention to the native language. Then it was that insular patriotism was born in the Norman, now cut off from the Continent, and as his preoccupation with the people among whom he lived increased, he learnt their speech. The simplifications of English of which we have spoken, the sort of compromise effected between the two languages, made it possible for the two races to understand each other, more or less. The words which the Normans found most difficult, in meaning or pronunciation, were gradually dropped and replaced by their own words. The whole of the thirteenth century is filled with these changes, which were accomplished in silence and by degrees, and which were hallowed by the custom of the fourteenth century. The Normans had, by this time, in great part abandoned French, and the native people had brought their language to a point at which it had lost the crabbed visage of its birthplace. Hence-

forth English reigned alone: in 1350 it took the place of French as the language of the schools; in 1362 it became that of the law-courts; and in 1399 it was used in parliament for the first time by Henry IV. In the same period prosody, which for long had wavered between one and the other of the two traditions, attained to perfect balance with Chaucer, who combined respect for the native tones of his fellow-countrymen with obedience to the essential laws of French versification. Whatever be the individual merits of the poets who preceded Chaucer, they do no more than mark the steps to that honourable place where he is enthroned as the first great metrical writer of his country.

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ful. Again and again, an author excuses himself for using a language so much despised as English, saying that he has wished to write for men who know no French and have no edifying books. He knows that his style is bad, that his rhymes are weak, but he believes himself justified by his aim. It is chiefly the progress in form which to-day has interest for those who go through this starved period of English literature.

The earliest in date of these religious writings, the *Poema Morale*,[1] which in its original form goes back to about 1170, is a grave exhortation to Christians to turn aside from the paths of this world and to enter those of devoutness and salvation. The preacher begins with self-accusation—he has reached old age without giving enough of his thoughts to God. He begs men to remember the Day of Judgment, to keep the thought of Hell and Paradise ever before them. Let them leave the broad road which leads to Hell and take the strait path to Heaven.

The feeling animating the poem is sincere and sometimes ardent, but severe and sad. While the conception of Paradise is mainly spiritual, Hell is depicted with all its arsenal of material terrors. Souls are tortured by fire and cold in turn: burning, they think that to freeze is felicity; freezing, they sigh for the flames. Although the Old and New Law are said in one passage to be comprised in love for one's neighbour, charity is not preached except as the means of salvation. The asceticism of the cloister is predominant, and the individualism of the Christian who must esteem himself above his kin. "Nor let wife hope in husband, nor husband in wife. Let each man live for himself throughout his days."

The novelty of this poem is not doctrinal but formal. In style and versification, these four hundred lines of seven accents, in sections of four and three, are an innovation, and the form had a high destiny, for it was adopted by most of the popular ballads. Since the rhythm is iambic, the line is, at the same time, roughly syllabic. Almost every one of these lines, which are rhymed in couplets, contains a maxim, sometimes well turned and in the nature of an antithesis, so that it is easy to remember. The sententious style contrasts with the epical manner of the Anglo-Saxons. The old phraseology has gone, and has been replaced by

[1] Text in Morris and Skeat's *Specimens of Early English*, vol. i. op. cit. English translation by Gasquet (1905).

a simple language, without images and bare and precise, but animated by some homely comparisons, at once exact and prosaic:

> Each man with what he hath may buy him heaven,
> Both he that hath more and he that hath less,
> This one with his penny, the other with his pound,
> 'Tis the most wondrous bargain that any man found.

We feel ourselves not far removed from the couplets of a De Foe, blunt and practical, in which there is the same lack of poetry and the same skill in speaking straight to simple people.

There is no originality of matter in *Ormulum*,[1] a mere translation and paraphrase of some forty of the Gospels read at Mass, which was written about 1200 by the monk Orm, a native of Northeast Mercia. This author's most salient characteristic probably is the respect for ancient tradition which made the commentaries of the Venerable Bede his inspiration. But the form of his work is entirely new, and remained an isolated phenomenon of literature. The seven-accented line with a fixed cesura (4+3) is used as in the *Poema Morale*, but is unrhymed, is made on the pattern of the quantitative Church verses, ends with a redundant feminine syllable, and is completely regular as regards the place of its accents and the number of its syllables. It is like a first essay in blank verse. Regularity is its only merit. The author is afflicted with pedantry and purism to a singular degree. He invents a new spelling, best illustrated in his redoubling of the consonant after every short vowel. Deliberate and diligent, spending all his energy on form, Orm marks the beginning of the desire to subject the universal indiscipline of the language to rules.

There is more poetry in some of the contemporary prayers.[2] The *Prayer to Our Lady* has warmth and emphasis, although its rhythm is uncertain; and in a few effusions of the early thirteenth century there is the tender mysticism of a Hugh of Saint Victor, for instance in the *Luve Ron* of Thomas of Hales, which contains the first truly artistic and poetic stanzas in the new language. It is with Villon's accent and in verses as cadenced as his, that the poet speaks of the transitory nature of earthly joys, and with an emotion already romantic that he enumerates the illustrious heroes and ladies of the past:

[1] Holt edition (Oxford, 1878). Extracts in Morris and Skeat, op. cit., vol. i.
[2] F. Furnivall, *Early English Poems and Lives of the Saints* (1862).

Hwer is Paris and Heleyne,
That weren so bryht and feyre on bleo,
Amadas, Tristram and Dideyne,
Yseude and alle theo,
Ector with his scharpe meyne,
And Cesar riche of worldes feo,
Heo beoth iglyden ut of the reyne,
So the schaft is of the cleo.[1]

The Ancren Rewle,[2] the best specimen of the prose of this time, is equally suave. It consists of rules for the ascetic life given by a prelate to three anchorites, women who have decided to live not in a convent, but in a solitary dwelling near a church. There is a new sweetness in these articles and minute instructions. The atmosphere is that of a period in which devotion to the Virgin is supreme, and the consciousness of feminine nature has entered even asceticism. This Rule also exists in Latin and in French, but the English does not seem to be a translation.

The pious writings of the early fourteenth century are more alert in style, and can be vivacious, gay and charming. The *Life of St. Brandan*,[3] a translation from the French, introduced the English to the enchantments and marvels and the optimism of the beautiful Celtic legend. The *Life of St. Dunstan*, which is attributed to Robert of Gloucester, is full of homely touches and cordial light-heartedness. These rude and artless verses have a comic liveliness which compensates for their unrelieved prosaic character, for instance, in the scene in which the saint, busy at his little forge, receives a visit from the devil in the guise of a pretty woman who smilingly talks nonsense to him. The saint is not taken in, but puts his pincers in the fire while she is speaking; then suddenly, when they are red-hot, pinches the devil by the nose, so that he flees, writhing and howling:

[1] Where is Paris and Helen,
That were so bright and fair of face,
Amadis, Tristram and Dido,
Isoud and all they,
Hector with his sharp strength,
And Cæsar rich of world's wealth,
They both glided out of the realm,
As the shaft is off the cliff.

[2] S. Morton (Camden Society, 1853). Modern English translation by Gasquet (1905).

[3] *The Early English Legendary or Lives of the Saints*, ed. C. Horstmann (Early English Text Society), vol. lxxxvii.

As well for the Devil to have been at home, and wiped his nose,
He never hied him thither more, to heal his cold.

At about the same time, in 1303, a Gilbertine monk, Robert
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ton, had written in the French of England, the debased language for which he excused himself by pleading his birth:

De le françois ni del rimer
Ne me doit nul homme blâmer,
Car en Angleterre fus né
Et nourri, ordiné et élevé.[2]

Wadington, in forty-four stories, had shown the paths of sin. Mannyng by turns follows, neglects and adds to this model, showing more independence than was customary. Although he uses the octosyllabic line with great licence, his verse is much more rhythmic, alive and vigorous than that of his Anglo-Norman prototype. He has, moreover, sacrificed a fair number of dull, theological dissertations to the forcefulness of his narratives. He adds a dozen stories of mainly local origin His object is amusement as much as edification. He is an observer of the customs of his time and paints them in lively colours. He inclines to satire, and he makes frank attacks on the landlords, anticipating *Piers Plowman*, and does not spare the clergy, whom he blames for laxity, luxury and frivolity. A true monk, he has little indulgence for women, and makes them responsible for the sins of men.

But his real merit is that he can tell a story well, clearly, with go, and with a certain agility hitherto unknown in England. To invent was not his part. When he does not copy Wadington, who himself had said of his book, "Rien del mien ni metrai," he draws on the common treasure. His stories are always interesting, in spite of their childishness and strange moral standpoint. They are very like the stories peddled by the Franciscan friars, to stimulate curiosity as much as devoutness and popular charity.

The demand for pious stories was abundantly supplied by a

[1] *Edited by Furnivall (Roxburghe Club Publications, 1862, and Early English Text Society), vol. cxix.*

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At about the same time, in 1303, a Gilbertine monk, Robert Mannyng of Brunne, in Lincoln, undertook to translate, under the title of *Handlyng Sinne*,[1] the *Manuel des Péchés*, which one of his fellow-countrymen of the previous century, William of Wadington, had written in the French of England, the debased language for which he excused himself by pleading his birth:

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collection of twenty-four thousand lines of verse, the *Cursor Mundi*,[1] which dates from about 1320. It is an embellished version of the New Testament, in the Northumbrian dialect, and an octosyllabic metre more regular than Mannyng's. Its aim is to interest the people in the Bible stories, thus providing a counter-attraction to the romances. "Most books are written for the French," says the author, and declares that he speaks to Englishmen. His poem may be described as the matter of the dramatic mysteries in narrative form. The Bible is not its only source, for its unknown author has recourse also to the *Historia Scolastica* of Peter Comestor, and does not hesitate to draw on many other French and Latin writers of the previous age. His copious verses are often picturesque, and are full of humanity, and that they enjoyed a great popularity is proved by the number of manuscript copies in which they have reached us.

A work of more local significance is that of the hermit Richard Rolle of Hampole.[2] For one thing, this writer is the only one of his time whose life is known to us in some detail. His reputation for sanctity was well established when he died, for the Cistercian sisters, whose convent was near his hermitage, expected his canonisation so confidently that they had an office written in his honour, together with his life in Latin.

He was born in Yorkshire about 1290, studied theology at Oxford, and at the age of nineteen fled, in fear of temptation, first from the university and then from his family, who thought him mad. He became a hermit. The fame of his sanctity spread through the neighbourhood and men came to visit him, but even while he was answering questions, he went on writing his meditations, and "what he said differed from what he wrote." He is the most diligent religious writer of his time. Such was his absorption in contemplation, that his friends could divest him of worn clothes, mend them and put them on him again without attracting his notice. Enthusiastic and visionary, mystical and fervent, he is a connecting-link between the orthodox saints, of whom he is the last, and the Protestant visionaries—Fox, Bunyan, Wesley and their like—whom he resembles in certain particularities of his life. He is tempted by the devil in the semblance

[1] Edited by R. Morris (Early English Text Society), lvii, lix-lxii., lxvi, lxviii., xcix., ci.

[2] *English Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. G. G. Perry (Early English Text Society, 1866); *Pricke of Conscience*, ed. R. Morris (Philological Society, 1863).

of a girl he had once loved. He is haunted by fear of death and Hell. He has moments of tenderness so exalted that his prose halts, for instance in his *Nominis Jesu Encomion:*

> Therefore Jhesu es thy name. A! A! that wondyrful name! A! that delittabyll name! This es the name that is abown all names. . . . I gede abowte be covatyse of reches and I fande noghte Jhesu. I rane be the wantonnes of flesche and I fand noghte Jhesu. I satt in companyes of worldly myrthe and I fand noghte Jhesu. . . . Therefore I turnede by anothir waye, and I rane abowte be poverte, and I fande Jhesu, pure borne in the worlde, laid in a crybe and lappid in clathis.

Unfortunately his verse does not fulfil the promise of fervour which this mood contains. It is wordy and mediocre, never without the taint of the scholastic and the puerile. Although a layman, never in orders, whose conduct and enthusiasm were ruled by intimate inspirations, Richard Rolle nevertheless represents the most rigid orthodoxy of his time. About 1340, when Wyclif was already sixteen years old and about to drive a breach in the system of strict Roman discipline, he extols it in his *Pricke of Conscience*, if the poem can still be attributed to him, which recent research renders doubtful. He becomes its defender a generation before the clergy were indignantly denounced by Langland for their abuses and stung by Chaucer's wit

Rolle's aim is to give an impulse to devoutness, by first showing forth the miseries and vicissitudes of this world, and then depicting the after-life, of which his presentment is as concrete and grossly material as was usual among the preachers of the day. Diseases are among the pains of Rolle's Purgatory—dropsy, gout, ulcers, boils, paralysis, quinsy, leprosy—and so is a fire of which the heat is graduated according to the gravity of sins. Great sins burn like wood, small sins like straw, those of middling import like hay. He emphasises the value of prayer, almsgiving, fasting and Masses as means of relieving the souls in Purgatory. At the moment of history, it is curious to come upon his unhesitating declaration of the efficacy of pardons bought from the pope or the bishops, who hold the keys of this treasure of the Church, purchased for her by her doctors, saints and martyrs. The pains of Holle's Hell are heat, cold, dirt, evil smells, hunger and thirst—the damned drink fire and suck vipers' heads to quench their thirst—and also darkness, the sight of devils, vermin, the blows of red-hot hammers wielded by demons, tears of fire, shame, red-hot chains and despair.

No idle tale overtaxes this author's credulity. One could wish, for his own sake, that many of his grave explanations had been written in jest. There is, for instance, his prescription for discovering the sex of a child in the act of birth: if its first cry be *A* it is a boy, if *E* a girl; for was not Adam's intitial *A* and Eve's *E*?

The good hermit was a little too credulous, behind even his own generation. He awakes a longing for the rough good sense of Langland and Chaucer's merry scepticism. And he makes us sigh also for Chaucer's art, as we read the ten thousand octosyllabic lines which versify his visions and display the childishness of his matter, unrelieved by any merit of form. These are poor verses. He himself confesses that he had no regard for the beautiful:

> For I rek noght, thogh the ryme be rude,
> If the maters thar-of be gude.

He marks the decline of religious poetry in the first half of the fourteenth century.

5. *Secular Poetry from 1200 to 1350.*—A little later than religious poetry, yet side by side with it and growing rapidly from age to age, a secular literature developed which was founded exclusively on French works. It was, as was natural, predominantly chivalrous, and was inspired by French romantic poems. It has, therefore, very little originality of matter, but it betrays national instincts in a preference for subjects and heroes connected with the land of Britain. Large parts of every one of the romantic cycles of chivalry were turned into English in order that minstrels might tell them to the people, but from the beginning the British stories were most valued, and gave the native poets matter for their most popular, and here and there also for their most original, songs.

In the last quarter of the twelfth or in the first years of the thirteenth century Layamon, a priest of Ernley, on the Severn and near the Welsh border, put Wace's *Brut* into English verse for the benefit of his fellow-countrymen.[1] Wace, with the curious mind and the detachment of an Anglo-Norman trouvère, had followed Geoffrey of Monmouth's fabulous history of the Britons, and had therefore glorified that people at the expense of their Saxon adversaries. And Layamon, or Laweman, a pure German

[1] *Layamon's Brut*, ed. F. Madden (1847). Extracts in Morris and Skeat, *Specimens*, vol. i. op. cit.

by race and tongue, faithfully repeated this story, as though he were ignorant of his own origin. His sympathies are all with the Britons; the Saxons are for him barbarians whose victories grieve him sorely and whose defeats delight him. It is not astonishing that he has scandalised modern English historians, almost to the point of being dubbed traitor. Freeman, the historian of the *Norman Conquest, cannot enough despise this Anglo-Saxon* who betrays his race, whose national heroes are not Alfred and Hengist, but Brutus, the descendant of Æneas, and the famous King Arthur. None the less, Layamon's patriotism is as ardent as it is mistaken. His error draws attention to the fact that the two races who had been enemies were already inextricably fused *They constituted a new unity which was already the English* nation, and had England for its place and symbol. It is because he sees the Britons as legitimate owners of England that Layamon makes common cause with them against the Saxons, whom he regards as invaders, and there is not a doubt that when he speaks of the Saxons he is secretly thinking of the Normans, the oppressors of his fellow-countrymen.

Layamon is, on the whole, a faithful translator. He contributes nothing new except certain passages of the Arthurian legend. These principally reflect the developments of this legend in the half-century which separated him from Wace, yet he deserves honour for first revealing some of the most poetic touches in the story. Living, as he did, on the Welsh March, he may have had direct access to traditions of which his forerunners were unaware. Most of his additions are, however, accepted nowadays as either based on a text of Wace other than that printed, or borrowed from the lost *Chronique rimée* of Geoffrey Gaimar.

Nevertheless, Layamon is no mere translator. He cannot be classed among the trouvères, with their curiosity and the simple amusement they found in their own fine tales. He is a scop, and has kept something of the epic mood and the wild, impassioned note of Anglo-Saxon poetry, together with part of its vocabulary, a rhythm which still hesitates between rhyme and alliteration, and certain traces of the ancient mythology and the sombre, ancestral enthusiasm for war. He is, moreover, the first writer to weave about King Arthur a fairy lore of which there is hardly a word in Geoffrey of Monmouth or in Wace. He is more at his ease than they in the realm of the marvellous. Wh

he tells the story of the passing of the king we seem to be listening to Malory:

When these words were spoken,
There came thither wending,
A little boat moving,
On the waters it floated,
And two women in it,
Wondrously formed;
And lo! they took Arthur,
And swiftly they bare him,
And softly him down laid,
And forth 'gan their sailing.
Then was it accomplished
What Merlin said whilom,
That great woe would follow
On Arthur's forthfaring.
Still think the Britons
That Arthur yet liveth
And dwelleth in Avalon
With the fairest of all elves;
Still wait the Britons
For Arthur's returning.

Very far from attaining to Wace's easy fluency, correctness and courtliness, Layamon, awkward and blunt, yet has a plebeian way which is not unpleasing. He recurs to the massive ironies of the Anglo-Saxon epic. Thus he tells how the British King Uther, with Arthur's help, defeated his brother Pascent, who together with Gillomar, the savage Irish invader, attempted to dethrone him. At the moment when Uther has wounded Gillomar to death and Arthur has slain Pascent the poet's voice has the very tones of the *Ode of Brunanburh:*

On the head he smote him
So that he down fell,
In his mouth his sword thrust—
Uncouth his dinner—
So went the sword's point
In the earth beneath him.
And then spake Uther,
"Pascent, now lie there,
Now hast thou Britain,
To thy hand hast won it.
So is now hap to thee;
Therein death hath come to thee;
Dwell shalt thou therein
With thy fellow Gillomar,
And well enjoy Britain.

To ȝou I deliver it;
Ye twain may presently
Dwell in the land with us;
Nor dread ȝe ever
Who food will give ȝe."

Such passages, occurring in a chivalrous romance, show the transitional character of Layamon's curious version of the Arthurian story. He was at once the last of the scops and the first of the English trouvères.

The works which came after his were principally rhymed chronicles, translations which include nearly all the cycles and are interesting mainly when they have a national character. Popular sympathy was to gather later about Robin Hood, the outlaw and unmatched bowman, a Saxon, proscribed by the Normans, who lived in Sherwood Forest with Maid Marian, his love. Meanwhile the English people were beguiled by the prowess of Bevis of Hampton, or they followed in amazement the improbable adventures of Sir Guy of Warwick, who left his wife, the fair Felice, that he might deserve her by his exploits, and who went to Palestine, slew the giant Colbrant and died as a pious hermit.

These romances were hardly more than copies of French or Latin books. There is more originality of plot, manner and spirit in the romances of *Havelock* and *Horn*, which were inspired by Scandinavian legends. Both had already been told in French by the indefatigable trouvères, but the versions of the two unknown English poets are independent, attractive, and in some ways superior. They have a distinct manner due to a different public. For there was something rough and popular about the audiences of the English minstrels. They would have wearied of long traditional descriptions of magnificent ceremonies and sumptuous halls, of unending analyses of courtly love. They wanted a quicker-moving story, a franker sentiment, and homelier realism in descriptions.

These two romances appeared in their English form towards the end of the thirteenth century. French chivalrous poetry was beginning to exhaust itself with repetition, and to give place to prose as a medium for reaching a public which had almost ceased to seek anything in literature except the element of the curious in adventures. But the romances had only just reached the people of England, whose minds were less cultivated, simpler, and more susceptible to the charm of rudimentary poetry.

After his *Lestorie des Engles* Gaimar had written the *Lai de Havelock*, the title being a corruption of the name of the Dane Anlaf Cuaran, who fought at Brunanburh. The English poet,[1] while seemingly unaware of Gaimar, yet does not derive immediately from the original legend, for the usual outline of the French romances has plainly influenced his style. Its beginning recalls the popular story which was to be crystallised in the famous ballad of the *Babes in the Wood*.

Goldburh, daughter of Athelwold, the good king of England, is left an orphan and the ward of her uncle Godrich, earl of Cornwall, who has promised to marry her to the best man in the kingdom, but who really is envious of her throne and thinks of ridding himself of her. As for Havelock, son of the Danish king Birkabeyn, he is in the power of the wretch Godard, his guardian, who delivers him to the poor fisherman Grim to be put to death. Grim spares the boy, who reaches England, where he is long a wanderer but is at last hired as scullion by Princess Goldburh's cook. Thus humbly placed, he amazes the country-side by his strength and his exploits, and Goldburh's uncle ironically marries her to him, as the best man he knows. But Goldburh recognises the youth's royal birth by the light which issues from his mouth and by a sign, the red cross he bears on his shoulder. With the help of a vassal who has remained faithful, Havelock reconquers Denmark, then wrests England from Godrich. Godard is dragged over stony soil by an old mare and then hanged, and Godrich is burnt alive. Thus all ends for the best.

Love plays an insignificant part in this romance in which adventure dominates. But the simple and artless narrative throws the element of the pathetic into full relief. In the beginning, when Godard's atrocities are related, we are a little reminded of Ugolino's tower, or of the prison in which Hubert makes ready to burn out little Arthur's eyes at the order of King John. Godard goes to visit his nephew Havelock and his two nieces in the dungeon in which he has cast them to die of cold and hunger. He kills the two little girls there, but his heart fails him so that he cannot finish the business. The miserable hut of the fisherman Grim, his dialogue with his wife Dame Leve, the fisherman's revulsion of feeling when he sees that the boy is of royal race, the mixture of pity, reverence and self-interest which decides

[1] *Havelock the Dane*, ed. W. W. Skeat (Oxford, 1902).

him to spare and even to serve the child whom he had sworn to kill—these scenes and others are so vigorously realistic as to appeal to every class of reader, and interest the simplest of them.

Havelock is a narrative in octosyllabic couplets, approximately correct. *Horn*,[1] with its very short lines, not syllabic but accentuated, has the form of a lay intended to be sung. Love, which is hardly mentioned in *Havelock*, is dominant in *Horn*. Thus *Horn* is particularly interesting as being transitional between the romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the romantic ballads of the later period.

According to the trouvère Thomas, who wrote *Horn et Rimenhild* in the twelfth century, Horn was the son of Havelock and Goldburh, the hero and heroine of the preceding romance. The two stories have in common their Scandinavian origin, but the later of them has much the larger share of the marvellous and the exotic.

There is a great difference between Thomas's version, with its five thousand alexandrine lines and long single-rhymed stanzas, and the lively English poem, which has fifteen hundred brief lines of two accents, so that it is about seven times shorter than the other. Its adventures are hardly less numerous, but the descriptions introduced on the slightest pretext have disappeared. Thomas never loses an opportunity to describe, whether holidays, feasts, ceremonies, fights, persons or clothes, and he fully analyses sentimental feelings. But his pictures and his analyses are alike conventional in type, and it is only because of the courtliness and refinement which he shares with all his school that the English poem awakens any regret for their tedium. There is much more go and energy in the English *Horn*. When we hear it, we do not feel that we are listening to a trouvère with his poetical recipes and his ready-made developments of a situation In spite of its improbabilities, the balder story comes nearer to the frank, manly tone of the epic.

Horn, the son of the king of Suddene, is a child when his father is slain by the Saracens, who land on the coast and waste the country. But Horn is so handsome that the Saracens cannot make up their minds to kill him, and with twelve other noble boys they put him on board a ship without sails or oars. The current bears these children, safe and sound, to the land of Ailmar, king

[1] Morris and Skeat, *Specimens*, vol. i. op. cit.

of Westernesse. Under this king's care Horn is well treated and taught, and wins love from everyone, but especially from Rymenhilde, the king's daughter, who gives herself to him. When their love is discovered, Horn is banished from the kingdom by Ailmar. He asks the girl to wait seven years for him, after which time she may, if he has not returned to her, marry another. She gives him a ring which is to remind him of his love and endow him with strength to withstand every trial. The seven years are filled with adventures and prowess. At their expiry, Ailmar compels his daughter to accept the hand of Madi, king of Reynes. Horn, whom she warns, hastens to the palace and reaches it on the wedding-day. He enters, disguised as a pilgrim, and his face smeared with black, so that he is not recognised, but is taken by everyone for a beggar. The bride is beside herself with grief and disfigured by tears, but she goes through the rites of a wedding-day. The scene of her recognition of her lover gives an idea of the swiftness and simple pathos of this poem. When she omits to pour out wine or ale for the supposed pilgrim, he asks her for a drink, because "beggars are thirsty," and while she is serving him he alludes obscurely to the past, turning her heart to ice since she fancies him a messenger sent to announce her lover's death to her. For some time he encourages her in this mistake, even giving her, as a last memorial of him she had loved, the gold ring which had been her own present. Thereupon she exclaims:

"Heart, now thou burst,
For Horn hast thou no more
That thee hath pained so sore."
She fell on her bed,
There her knife is hid,
To slay therewith her loathed king
And herself, both,
On that same night,
If Horn come not might.
To heart knife she set,
But Horn anon her let,
His shirt-lap he can take,
And wiped away that black,
That was on his neck,
And said, "Queen, so dear,
I am Horn, thine own.
Nor canst thou me not know.
I am Horn of Westernesse,
In arms thou me kiss."

There are no subtle analyses in *Horn*, but it has what is better, the undisguised voice of passion.

Havelock, and even more *Horn*, show how much borrowing from French chivalrous poetry went on at this time, and how original English poetry was beginning to be, even when it borrowed. There is the same mixture of imitation and independence in the other poetic forms acclimatised in the same period. As early as the middle of the thirteenth century, a curious poem was written in eighteen hundred octosyllabic lines, *The Owl and Nightingale.*[1] It is one of the *disputoisons* or tensons, held in so much honour by the poets of Provence and France, an allegorical debate between an owl and a nightingale who discuss the rival merits of their song. Finally they decide to submit the dispute to "Maister Nicole of Guldeforde. . . . He wuneth at Porteshom, at one tune in Dorsete. . . ." The solution is proposed by the nightingale and accepted by the owl, who knows that if, in his youth, Master Nicole loved the nightingale and "other wighte gente an smale" overmuch, he has grown older and wiser. Master Nicole has often been cited as author of the poem, but since it praises him he was more probably the author's friend.

This poem is older than *Havelock* and *Horn* by half a century. It is the first work in English which is written correctly and under French influence, and which, therefore, shows that the foreign form had been so assimilated as to allow native words to be fitted to it pleasantly as well as exactly It is true that it does not attain to beauty: it has a stiffness, as of a language not yet supple, and it is weighted by many tedious passages and repetitions But the style is lucid, there are lively touches, and an attempt is made to use rhyme for emphasising points and outline.

The scene is well set: the picture of the flowery hedge in which the nightingale sings, and of the ancient, ivy-grown trunk on which sits the owl, is clear. The opponents are made to join issue cleverly. Later the fable does indeed unmask itself rather too completely. The adversaries evince a litigious acrimony, more appropriate to the law-courts than the woods. They are veritable litigants and forget too easily that they are birds. It is soon evi-

[1] *The Owl and Nightingale*, ed Stevenson (Roxburghe Society, 1838), Thomas Wright (Percy Society, 1843), F H. Stratman (Krefeld, 1868), J E Wells (The Belles Lettres Series, Boston), and Atkins (Cambridge, 1922). Extracts in Morris and Skeat, op. cit. vol. i.

dent that the nightingale, with his voice "of harpe and pipe," stands for careless youth, the owl, with his mournful cry, for the wisdom of old age. Both are pious, but while the nightingale hymns a rapturous piety, thinking to win Heaven with songs, the owl insists on the need for gravity, self-examination and good works. The poet is inclined to side with the owl, but on the whole his dramatic impartiality is sufficiently indicated, and Master Nicole's verdict is left doubtful.

Although it has less lightness and charm, is harsher and heavier and more carefully moral, *The Owl and Nightingale* is very like some pages of old French poetry. But this time it seems that we are concerned with an original work. The markedly iambic line, much accentuated and made up almost entirely of monosyllables, tends to diverge from the French while it imitates it. The metrical line is more robust and less fluent than its French models, more beset with consonants and poorer in vowels.

This poem, in the middle of the thirteenth century, was isolated, but in the early years of the next century the various forms of a poetry no longer exclusively religious or chivalrous were multiplied. With the fourteenth century the satirical spirit entered English in adaptations of the fabliaux, some of them so lively that they herald Chaucer. Such is the fable of *Dame Siriz or the Weeping Bitch*,[1] in which a self-styled witch, a true *Macette*, favours a clerk's love-suit to a merchant's wife. The burgher woman is unmoved until the witch appears before her, leading a little bitch to whom she has given pepper and mustard to make it weep, and whom she declares to be her own daughter, metamorphosed for having rejected the advances of a clerk. Clerks are, she says, redoubtable persons. And the frightened burgher's wife thereupon lets her lover have his will of her.

Here disrespect for morals knows no restraint. Nor does it in the *Roman de Renart*; and it is with the same mocking spirit and pleasure in beholding the tricks of the unscrupulous that a poet relates, in *The Fox and the Wolf*,[2] the amusing cunning of a fox who falls carelessly into a well, and induces the wolf, after due confession and sermon, to pull him out and take his place

[1] *Middle English Humorous Tales in Verse* (Boston, 1913).

[2] *The Fox and the Wolf*, ed. T. Wright and J. O. Halliwell in *Reliquae Antiquae* (1845); Mätzner in *Altenglische Sprachproben* (1867), and G. H. McKnight in *Middle English Humorous Tales in Verse* (1913).

there. Here, indeed, only language shows that poet and public are not French.

We have the same impression when we read the few extant songs of the period. Some, dating from the reign of Edward I. (1272-1307),[1] far surpass in lyrical charm the verses we have examined, and their inspiration and form are entirely French. They have the French way of evoking pictures of spring and flowering gardens, and these *clichés* take the place of the sombre, northern suggestions of the Anglo-Saxons. But the literary novelty of the language can lend to this poetry a sincerity and pathos which are absent from the outworn and conventional French verses of the same age. Thus, in the graceful song *Alison*, a refrain on the French model supports a stanza of mixed three- and four-accented lines, which has skilfully arranged rhymes, some of them repeated as often as five times:

A handy [2] hap I have y-hent,[3]
I wot from Heaven it is me sent,
From all women my love is lent,[4]
And lights on Alison.

In the song *Springtime* the misery of passion is portrayed. The lover sees joy everywhere around him, in the sky, among the birds, among the very worms—"worms woo under clods"—among lovers who secretly whisper, and among women "who wax wonder proud, so well it will them seem." But for lack of the only love he desires, he "this joy-weal will forgo, and in the wood be banished."

Elsewhere freer and more native rhythms give out a yet more spontaneous note:

Summer is y-comen in!
Loud sing cuckoo!
Groweth seed and bloweth mead,
And springeth the wood new.
Sing cuckoo! cuckoo!

Ewe bleateth after lamb,
Loweth after calfe cow;
Bullock starteth, buck verteth
Merry sing cuckoo!
Cuckoo! cuckoo!

[1] Wright, *Specimens of Lyric Poetry* (Percy Society, 1842). Extracts in Morris and Skeat, *Specimens*, vol ii op cit
[2] Gracious [3] Caught. [4] Given away.

Nor cease thou ever now.
Sing cuckoo now!
Sing cuckoo!

We quote also the simple refrain of a poem of courtly love which has otherwise nothing of the popular:

Blow, northern wind,
Send thou me my sweeting,
Blow northern wind, blow, blow, blow!

Folk-songs of this type reappear only at the end of the sixteenth century, for they were long overlaid by a more formalist poetry. But at this time the numerous and exact descriptive touches bear witness to a more marked feeling for nature than is perceptible in most of the contemporary French songs.

But it is perhaps in the political songs,[1] made from the middle of the thirteenth century onwards, that the native genius shows itself most unmistakably. Elsewhere imitation is the rule and themes are borrowed wholesale from foreign sources. But the political songs are inspired by events within the country; they express aspirations, anger, loves and hates which are specially English. At first, it is true, they were written in Latin or French: they originated with the clerks and were meant for the ruling class. But very soon the minstrels began to compose them for the people, and therefore in English. It is noteworthy that the earliest of these satires appeared during the Barons' War, when the nobles ranged themselves about Simon de Montfort to give royalty check. The whole English people were moved by this great quarrel, and the support of the popular or Anglo-Saxon element was indispensable to the audacious campaign of the rebel peers. In 1264 a song on the Battle of Lewes ridiculed Richard of Cornwall, the brother of King Henry III.:

Richard that thou be ever trichard,
Trichen shalt thou never more.

Presently the voice of social satire was heard in the land. In tones that are harsh and often coarse, which must have been echoed by common men up and down the country, the vices of the nobles, the state and the clergy were denounced. Song sided

[1] T. Wright, *Political Songs of England from the Reign of John to Edward II.* (Camden Society, 1839).

with the people against their governors, for instance in the *Song of the Husbandman*, which complains of the burden of taxes and the oppression of bailiff and woodward. Song rose even against the king when he was tyrannous and, like Edward II., dissolved his parliament to save his favourite. The repetition of rhymes at short intervals crystallised in the memory some rough truths which served as rallying cries to the multitude:

For might is right,
Light is night,
And fight is flight,
For might is right, the land is lawless,
For night is light, the land is loreless,
For fight is flight, the land is nameless

Another poet anticipated Langland in his denunciation of all the vices of society: the law, the Church, the priests, the friars mendicant—all had been alike corrupted by love of money:

And if the rich man die that was of any might,
Then will the Friars for the corpse fight,
It is not all for the calf that cow loweth,
But it is for the green grass that in the meadow groweth,
So good.

The Knights Hospitallers were no better, nor were the nobles, the physicians, the traders, the bakers. The honest and pious poet is indignant against every kind of fraud.

It was easy for this entirely national poetry to become patriotic. The English attentively followed foreign events. France was now their enemy, and there was great rejoicing when the news came, in 1302, of the defeat of the French chivalry by the burghers of Flanders:

Listen, lordings, both young and old,
Of the Frenchmen that were so proud and bold,
How the Flemish men bought them and sold,
Upon a Wednesday,
Better them were at home in their land,
Than for to seek Flemings by the sea strand,
Where through many a French wife wringeth her hand,
And singeth, Welladay!

When the English were drawn into the struggle directly, patriotism became exalted, and burst, in the first and victorious

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When the English were drawn into the struggle directly, patriotism became exalted, and burst, in the first and victorious

period of the reign of Edward III., into songs of triumph. A northerner, Laurence Minot,[1] came forward as official bard to the king, to sing his victories in Scotland, Flanders and France. Thus he celebrated, soon after the events, Halidon Hill, the naval battle of Sluys, the siege of Calais and other royal exploits.

The heavy and pitiless irony heaped on the vanquished in these war-songs recalls the Anglo-Saxon verses. Yet with the triumph there is a certain gaiety which, although in doubtful taste, moderates that fierceness which belonged to the old poetry.

Edward and his soldiers are incomparable heroes; all their enemies are braggarts and cowards, false and perjured traitors. But justice is surely not to be expected in poetry of this kind, to which it is unessential and of which it might diminish the effect. Such religious sentiment as mingles, here and there, with the insults, has a purely conventional air, and, if it be sincere, its sincerity is superficial.

In the absence of depth, we might hope to come upon the exact or picturesque details about the various fights which would give substance to the poems without hampering their lyrical swing. But there are none such. There is hardly place for narrative in these songs: they do little more than chant the praises of the victors and cover the vanquished with insults.

All the same, they are interesting. They bear witness to the national unity and to the high self-esteem which the English nation had acquired. These trumpet-calls are a prelude to the rich literature of the next generation. We see the English at Bannockburn avenging themselves on the Scots. We see the lilies trampled underfoot, France humiliated, who had been so proud, so sure of herself, so disdainful.

It is the metrical form of Minot's songs which gives them their special value. They are written in the Northumbrian dialect and combine popular and artistic elements. Alliteration reigns everywhere, vigorously holding together verses which, none the less, are always rhymed. Sometimes the line seems to be the direct product of the old alliterative line, its rhyme being supperadded. The rhyme and the very regular stanza, with its fixed form, derive from France. As often as not, moreover, the line is not purely accentual, but also as syllabic as the most correct specimens of the time. Conscious artistry is also shown in the frequency with

[1] J. Hall, *The Poems of Laurence Minot* (Clarendon Press).

which the most important word in the first line of a stanza echoes that in the last line of the preceding one.

All this makes of each poem a whole which owes much to deliberate arrangement, and, incontestably, the combined effect of these artifices of rhythm and structure is that Minot's poems have an impetus, a beguiling lyrical movement, not due to their thought. Nor does it proceed from their language, which is conventional, without images, and frequently prosaic, and which abounds with padding and platitudes.

The great victories of Edward III. were being sung in London, and Minot's poems were current in the countryside, when Chaucer was born and when his mind received its first impressions. Glory in the field of battle was followed by literary achievement as brilliant. The long period of dependence was about to end. The English language, which had hitherto conned what others said, often stammering the while, now had faith in its destiny. Nothing is more striking than the number, the originality and the worth of the works which made the latter half of the fourteenth century a flowering season in English literature.

This brilliant efflorescence was the result of the progress made in the two previous centuries. Their arduous and obscure task was gradually to merge the so disparate elements of the new language in a harmonious whole. Whoever listens to the poetry attentively at first perceives discords and then becomes aware of the progress realised. So far, it is only by flashes that beauty is reached, but already the principles which should regulate style and verse have been discovered. The place of the old epic verse-form is not yet filled, for it has not found a fit successor either in the too slender octosyllabic line, or in the line of fourteen syllables, which is only seemingly long, since it is divided into sections (8 + 6), but which is, for this reason, too staccato in its movement. Some poets, however, have already been able to tell their tales fluently, or to sing with some grace or warmth of feeling in short-lined verse. This English, with its popular tendencies, is still deficient in courtliness and art, but nothing remains to prevent it from acquiring these qualities as well as others, for it is on the eve of becoming the language of the court as well as that of the countryman and the burgher. As yet nothing is finished, but everything is ready.

BOOK II

THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES (1350-1516)—FROM CHAUCER TO THE RENASCENCE

CHAPTER I

THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY (1350-1400) —ROUND ABOUT CHAUCER[1]

1. *England in the Second Half of the Fourteenth Century. Political and Social Conditions.*—The victories of Edward III. made England conscious of her strength and unity, but, with the exception of Minot's mediocre songs, they did not inspire the nascent literature. It is remarkable that almost all the works which are the glory of the second half of the fourteenth century appeared in the unhappy years between 1360 and 1400 which followed on the triumphant period.

It was in these years, after the Treaty of Brétigny, that the political wisdom of Charles V. won back for France almost all the English conquests, that the king, grown senile and luxurious, caused men to forget his exploits, and that his heir, the Black Prince, met with an early death. In these years, also, the child Richard II. began his reign, which was one of the most unfortunate England has known, whether during the period of the regency, with its miserable rivalries, or during that of the king's personal rule, capricious, arbitrary, disorderly and spendthrift. The Black Death wasted the people; the Kentish peasants made their formidable rising under Wat Tyler; French descents insulted English land; and Wyclif incited the religious schism which divided the population into the two parties of the Lollards and the orthodox. Yet it was during these seemingly calamitous years that the poetry which is truly English had its first season of flowering. Lamentations, satire and denunciation fill the works which

[1] Kenneth Sisam, *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose* (Oxford, 1921).

treat of politics or religion. Clergy and rulers are represented as equally corrupt and incapable, immoral and undisciplined.

Nevertheless this poetry, as a whole, has such an air of energy and youth as throws doubt on the importance to daily life of the apparent realities of history. It has to be acknowledged that, disasters and visitations notwithstanding, everyday life pursued its course confidently, eagerly, even merrily. In spite of them, the country became more and more prosperous, the burgher class grew wealthy, and the people enjoyed a measure of independence as the Norman and English races came to be almost completely fused. In spite of everything, Merry England was born. There were inevitable miseries, but they left ample room for joy and hope. The light of heart loved frank feasting, mirth and holidays; the austere sighed over the world's sins, yet did not lose courage, but set themselves strenuously to reform abuses. Social conditions were unstable, and the news of a passionate revolt could make men tremble, but the rebels were individuals who had ceased to bend beneath the yoke, and had thrown off oppression and inertia. They were judging, blaming, criticising, jeering, growing angry. They had attained to free thought and free speech.

2. *Prose from 1350 to 1400. Trevisa, Mandeville, Chaucer, Wyclif.*—The state of society is better understood after a glance at the prose literature of this time. Its bulk is so small and its literary quality so slight that it is hardly of value except as giving information about the period. English prose took form with a slowness which is striking in comparison with the activity of France and Italy and the value of their productions in this sphere. Villehardouin and Joinville were writing even in the thirteenth century, and France now boasted of Froissart, Chaucer's contemporary, while Italy had Boccaccio. Meanwhile in England, where there was no dearth of talented men, the rivals of the continental chroniclers still used Latin as their medium Thus the learned and intelligent Higden wrote his *Polychronicon* in Latin before 1363, and Walsingham of St. Albans, towards the end of the century, compiled in Latin chronicles which match the pages of Froissart in their spirited descriptions of scenes.

English was still a disinherited tongue, used for translations. A Gloucestershire parish-priest, John of Trevisa, undertook to translate Higden's *Polychronicon*, and completed this enterprise

which purports to be told by himself, is borrowed from Jean de Meung, who had translated it from the *Liber Consolationis et Consilii* of the judge Albertano de Brescia (1246), while the other, the Good Parson's Tale, is in part translated from the famous French sermon of Friar Laurence, *La Somme des Vices et des Vertus*. Chaucer also brought together several Latin treatises in his *Astrolabe*, a work intended to teach astrology to his son Lewis, then ten years old.

On the whole, Chaucer's prose conforms to the rule already stated: it is the more English for being translated from French, the stiffer for being translated from Latin. Everywhere, however, it has the qualities which mark a good writer. It would be easy to quote pages in which it attains to loftiness, as when Philosophy appears to Boethius in his prison, or passages showing precision and swiftness, like those which enumerate the misfortunes of poor Melibeus.

Except for his Boethius, in which he happily followed Alfred, Chaucer's choice of originals is regrettable. Their scholastic character hides the beauties of form which distinguish his style from that of his contemporaries. Chaucer was not, however, so much under the influence of the schoolmen that he failed to see where they were ridiculous. He would have us read his prose tales, especially "Melibeus," with a smile which makes them less dry and stiff.

All these are prose-writers who were translators. We have still to speak of a man who was by turns a translator and an original writer in prose, an author of mediocre prose who gave to English prose literature an impulse and an efficacy which were decisive. This was John Wyclif, called the first Protestant, the adversary of the papacy and the assailant of Catholic dogma.[1]

He was born about 1324, was a professor at Oxford and chaplain to Edward III., and was very learned in theology and in Roman and English law. He was drawn into that struggle between the king of England and the pope which was at once political and religious, and which broke out in 1365.

The prestige of the papacy had suffered by its defeat at the

[1] *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, 3 vols. ed. Arnold (Oxford, 1869-71); *English Works of Wyclif, hitherto unprinted*, ed. Matthew (Early English Text Society, 1880); R. L. Poole, *Wyclif and Movements for Reform* (1889); G. Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, London, 1900 (3rd edition).

hands of Philip the Fair at the beginning of the century, and by the removal to Avignon. France had set the example of revolt against the financial claims of the Church of Rome. England followed, when Urban V. demanded of Edward III. arrears for thirty years of the tribute which John Lackland had promised to pay to his predecessor. An anonymous pamphlet defended Urban's claim, and Wyclif was charged or took upon himself to answer it. He had already the spirit of independence and the confidence in individual logic, as applied to the Scriptural text, which characterise Protestantism. But he began with moderation, claiming merely to echo the national hostility to Urban's demands. Gradually the quarrel grew heated and enlarged its scope. Wyclif attacked the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the papal supremacy, and since the court supported him weakly, he appealed to the people. Hitherto, down to 1380, he had written in Latin, but he now wrote in English. With the help of others he translated the Bible, and at the same time he popularised his ideas by means of the preachers who were called "poor priests," and were soon to be known as Lollards. Educated but poor men, clothed in coarse woollen garments, they went from parish to parish, opposing the friars against whom Wyclif had declared war. Their severe and practical sermons were in contrast to the scholastic grandiloquence of the friars.

From 1380 onwards Wyclif's ideas, hardly different till then from those later enunciated by Langland or hinted by Chaucer, had a new direction. They became an attack on dogma, for he renounced belief in the Eucharist except as a symbol, and attacked devotion to the saints and the use of indulgences.

He was forsaken by all his former friends. The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 had frightened the nobles and the burghers and brought traditional and conservative ideas back to favour, and Wyclif's doctrines were condemned by the Archbishop of Canterbury and by Oxford University. He was not, however, personally molested, and he ended his life in peace in 1384, in his cure of Lutterworth in Leicestershire.

There is no disputing his social importance in the latter half of the fourteenth century. As a writer of prose he also, in two ways, played a considerable part.

He was, to begin with, the first translator of the Bible into the vulgar tongue. He translated the New Testament, while

Hereford, his coadjutor, translated the Old. Undoubtedly his translation is very faulty, for his aim was to be literal, and he had a long habit of writing Latin and found it difficult to attain, late in life, to true English prose. He abounds in Latin constructions, makes too much use of relative clauses. Nevertheless he supplied the first elements of that biblical language which was to be an integral part of English and to be used for the famous Authorised Version of 1611.

Secondly, Wyclif first appealed directly to the nation by such leaflets and pamphlets as were to swarm in the days of the real Reformation. If Wyclif in these writings shows himself destitute of every artistic quality, he yet deserves recognition for the logic and the vigour with which he posed in them certain formulas.

The agitation which his doctrine and writings stirred into being must always be kept in mind when the literature of the end of the fifteenth century is studied.

3. *The Dialects. The Reappearance in the West of Alliterative Verse.*—It is poetry and not prose which is the glory of this age. The pith of the matter was there, rich and vital. But there was an obstacle to the birth of a literary era which should be harmonious and complete. For if classes were beginning to draw closer together and races to intermingle, the language of the country could not yet be said to have reached unity. The period is perhaps that in which the diversity of the dialects of England can best be perceived. Leaving on one side the small differences of speech which distinguished almost every county from another, there were at least four dialects which were struggling for supremacy, so equally matched that it was impossible in 1380 to say which of them would have the greatest future —the Northern, Southern, East Midland and West Midland dialects. Each had its own literature, and the awakening in the fourteenth century had at first the effect of enriching all four together, so that confusion did not lessen but was intensified. The study of the literature of this century is therefore necessarily fragmentary. The critic first perceives that progress in the north, and more especially in the west, had been far slower than in the rest of the country. It is plain, even if vocabulary and grammar be left out of account, that these districts remained attached to the forms of the past. They kept their taste for

alliteration, and at least one of them retained, surprisingly, the alliterative verse-form, almost pure and still vital, able to make a final struggle for life.

Since the Norman Conquest, alliterative verse had led a subterranean existence, showing itself, here and there, even in the south, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, then lost to sight, to reappear, abundant and flourishing, in the west of England about the middle of the fourteenth century. On the Welsh border and farther north, in Lancashire and Cumberland, it prospered especially, as was natural since the Welsh March was the part of England least accessible to French influence. This district was also the most backward, the last to be settled by the Saxons and by the Normans, and that in which artistic culture had been most retarded by the unceasing warfare with the Welsh. The author of *William and the Werwolf* pleads his lack of art and genius to excuse his use of the alliterative rather than the octosyllabic line.

The provincialism of a backward district does not, however, by itself explain the return to this old verse-form. It was due also to the failure of the new versification to fill the place of the old epic verse. Chaucer had not yet imported from France the decasyllabic or heroic line which was to take precedence of all others. The prevalent short and slight rhythms could not satisfy men in whose ears the last echoes of the epic verse of their ancestors were still ringing.

Moreover, the versification derived from France lacked an assured prosody. Accent hovered, doubtfully, over the different syllables of words of French origin, and even Germanic words were infected by the uncertainty. The relation between rhythm and tonic accent was, in consequence, not clearly perceived. There were thus various reasons why the old verse-form should come back to life at the moment when the spirit of the nation was reborn.

The consequences of the return to the old form were that the poetry of the west regained an epic swing, resumed the use of the epithets and synonyms necessary to alliteration, revived many archaisms, and, finally, restored the Teutonic elements of the language to the first place. This archaism, which was also provincialism, was to consign poems of this date, many of them

remarkable, to a long oblivion. As examples of the difficulty of this local poetry, verses can be quoted which are to-day as strange to read and as hard to understand as a line of *Beowulf:*

> Schon schene upon schaft schelkene blode.
> (Shóne sheen upon the shaft the warriors' blood.)

Nevertheless these alliterative poets do not, like some nineteenth-century poets, submit their vocabulary to the criterion of the exclusively Germanic. None of them makes it a rule to banish words of foreign derivation. The new language had so penetrated the people, even of remote districts, that statisticians find almost as many French and Latin words in the alliterative poems as in Chaucer. But these words have been more Anglicised: their spelling has grown English for the reason that the alliterative poets are generally less literate than the others, and use words not as they read them but as they hear them. Accent, in particular, gives an English character to the words of foreign root, for the initial tonic accent necessary to alliteration is imposed on them, instead of the final accent which was theirs originally and which rhyme emphasises and preserves.

Yet it must not be thought that versification in these districts was unaffected by continental influences. If much verse was written, with even artificial correctness, on the Anglo-Saxon model, rejecting rhyme and excluding the stanza, there are also poems, like those of Laurence Minot, which are both rhymed and alliterative, and in which the lines are grouped either in irregular stanzas not unlike the *laisses* of the early French trouvères, sometimes followed by a short-line refrain, or in completely regular stanzas which observe the most minute rules of the fixed form of French poetry.

There is also a curious contrast between the form and the subject of these verses. The Cædmonian line is revived for poems of chivalry, or allegories inspired by the *Roman de la Rose,* or descriptions of customs which are plainly of a younger age. But this form, even when it is an imitation, has the advantage of giving the English poets an independence they often lack when they have recourse to a metre copied from the French. The originality is chiefly perceptible in details of style. Moreover, these alliterative poems, being really provincial, often have a roughness which is of the people, a harsh flavour of the soil, so

that, for good or for evil, they are very distinct from the poetry of the court.

The earliest in date of the alliterative poems is a fragment of a romance of the Holy Grail called *Joseph of Arimathie.*[1] It is based on a French story in prose which it condenses. It acquires a certain originality from its vigour of language, particularly noticeable, as in Anglo-Saxon poems, in the narratives of war and battle. Two fragments have been preserved of a romance called *Alexander,*[2] which is connected with the romances of the ancient cycle.

The romance of *Guillaume de Palerne* or *William and the Werwolf*[3] has reached us in a complete state and its exact date is known. This translation of the French romance of the same name appeared in 1355. It is a real fairy-tale, its hero a prince of Spain changed into a wolf by his stepmother, but retaining, in this fierce shape, his kindly nature. The translator follows the story faithfully but not slavishly, for he makes cuts and additions, adding chiefly some pretty descriptions of nature and some artless homely details which redeem the rusticity of the language and the awkwardness of the construction. The alliterative verse is of very correct structure, and keeps its native vigour, although neither the beauty nor the harmony of the best of the old models. Here, more than elsewhere, the general defect of this verse-form in the fourteenth century is perceptible. The lack of rhyme is felt in the strongly rhythmic line. It is as though a hammer fell heavily on an anvil not of iron, but of wood, and gave out a dull and disappointing sound.

4. *"Sir Gawayn and the Grene Knyght." "Pearl."*—The four alliterative poems contained in a single manuscript and entitled *Pearl, Purity, Patience* and *Sir Gawayn and the Grene Knyght* are much superior to those we have examined. In spite of their profound differences of subject and form, these poems have analogies of language and feeling which cause them usually to be attributed to the same poet. The dialect is that of Lancashire, the probable date round 1360-70. The author is unknown, and attempts to identify him with the Scottish poet Huchown of the Awle Ryale, who wrote a *Morte Arthure* and the *Pistil of*

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Susan,[1] or with the philosopher Strode, Chaucer's enigmatic friend, are no more than conjectural. If, however, it be admitted that there is question only of one poet, his works give some indications of the probable course of his life and cast of his mind. He was well versed both in the Bible and in profane poetry. He was familiar with castles, banquetings, hunts and tournaments. He knew courtly society and he knew the country, even the wild and solitary country of the western hills. His life had periods of worldliness and periods of devout religious observance, but he was never careless of moral edification. The praise of purity and chastity is the dominant note of each of his poems.

His only secular work is *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knyght*,[2] which owes much to all the earlier Arthurian romances, and especially to the *Perceval* of Chrestien de Troyes. But its special subject, the singular adventure which is its theme, are known only through this author. There is no reason why the "stiff and strong" work to which he alludes as his source should not have existed. Anyhow, by his choice of incidents, his pictures and descriptions and the grouping and proportioning of the parts which make a whole, he proves himself an experienced artist.

Strange is the entry of the Green Knight, a giant on a giant horse, into the great hall of Camelot, where King Arthur is keeping Christmas among the knights of the Round Table. He has come to try Arthur's knights. He will allow his head to be stricken by the great axe he holds in his hand, if the striker will swear to come in a twelvemonth and a day and receive a like stroke from him. As they all are hesitating, and Arthur, for the honour of the Round Table, is about to take up the challenge, Gawain claims the axe and severs the head of the unknown knight from his body. Unmoved, the giant picks up his head, calls upon Gawain to keep his word, and departs at a gallop, leaving all amazed.

When the year has passed, Gawain sets out, according to his promise, to find the Green Knight. Long is his quest through rugged, mountainous country. At last, on Christmas Eve, he finds himself before the comeliest castle he has ever beheld, and

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is very honourably received there. For three days he is the guest of a noble old man, who is master of the house, and of his wife, who is fairer even than Guinevere. Every morning the old man goes off hunting, and every morning the lady visits Gawain's chamber to tempt him with the offer of her love. The courtly but pure Gawain resists temptation, yet accepts from the amorous lady a girdle of green silk "with gold schabed," which shall preserve him from being slain. And when, thereafter, Gawain comes to his ordeal, the axe, falling on his head, does no more than cut his skin, in expiation of his fault in taking the girdle. Eventually his host proves to be the Green Knight, and his temptress Morgayn la Fay, who had undertaken to humiliate Arthur and his knights. Gawain returns to Camelot, and Arthur causes a band of bright green to be worn by each of the lords and ladies of his court for Gawain's sake.

This very well written poem is remarkable for the liveliness and variety of its scenes. There is delicate psychology in the scenes of the temptation, and the theme, the triumph of chastity, is lightened by a smile. The poet gracefully delineates the feelings of the gallant knight, mirror of courtesy, caught between his politeness and his desire to remain pure, all of whose virtue is preserved to him without a slur upon his gentleness. The story has many analogies with the tale of the second book of the *Faërie Queene*, but both in human and in dramatic interest it is superior to Spenser. Gawain is really tempted, whereas Sir Guyon is temperance incarnate, and passes, bloodless and abstract, through the voluptuousness of the Bower of Bliss. The author of *Gawayne* draws a man where Spenser draws insensate virtue.

There is also realistic vigour in the description of the three successive hunts. The details are taken from life, and nothing is left out of the stag-hunt, not even the making of the quarry and breaking of the deer. Love of the open air and a feeling for nature are perhaps the most distinctive characteristics of this poem. It has two stanzas which, before Tennyson, describe the year's cycle. The seasons succeed each other, and for Gawain their flight brings ever nearer the hour of his redoubtable tryst: the cold and gloomy winter gives place to the fructifying showers of spring; the birds sing and the flowers blow; then summer ripens the crops and hardens the grain, and finally the leaves fall and the grass is grey.

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The poet is never more at his ease or more original than when he is describing rough weather and a rugged landscape. Here instinct leads him to join hands with the scops. It is the mournful scenery of *Beowulf* which rises all around Gawain as he makes his way to the green chapel. He has marvellous fights with beasts and men, but they are as nothing to the assaults of winter:

> For werre [1] wrathed [2] hym not so much, that wynter was wors,
> When the colde cler water fro the cloudes schadden,[3]
> Ner [4] slayn wyth the slete he sleped in his yrnes,[5]
> Mo nygtes then in-noghe [6] in naked rokkes,
> Ther as claterande fro the crest the colde borne [7] rennes,
> And henged hege [8] over his hede in hard ysse-ikkles.[9]

Elsewhere he passes through a mountain forest, with enormous oaks, whitened by the snow:

> With roge raged [10] mosse rayled ay-where,
> With mony bryddes unblythe upon bare twyges,
> That pitosly ther piped for pyne of the colde.

He has a striking vision of a misty morning in the hills—"each hill had a hat and a mist-cloak huge."

Thus the Anglo-Saxon mist enwraps this poem of Celtic origin, a poem of chivalry and courtesy which has for hero, not the Gawain whom a tradition, followed by Tennyson, made into the type of a quarrelsome, frivolous and volatile knight, but Gawain of the unstained shield, who rivalled the valour of Lancelot and the chastity of Perceval and Galahad.

Pearl [11] is a poem entirely different in origin, structure and atmosphere. It is an allegory which connects not with the Arthurian cycle, but with the *Roman de la Rose*. The author is not unacquainted with this poem, although, since he speaks of the "*pure* rose of Clopinel," that is of Jean de Meung, his knowledge of its conclusion seems to be faulty. The allegorical element of his work is combined with a symbolism directly derived from the Apocalypse, whence he borrows his concluding vision of the New Jerusalem. This mixture constitutes the originality of the poem and saves it from the dry formula of the prevailing type of alle-

[1] war. [2] irked. [3] shed. [4] near. [5] armour. [6] enough. [7] burn. [8] high. [9] icicles. [10] rough ragged.

[11] See Israel Gollancz: *Pearl*, edition with modern English rendering (1891); W. H. Schofield, *Symbolism, Allegory and Autobiography in the Pearl*, Pub. of the Modern Lang. Assoc. of America (1909).

gory, with its too conventional frame. It acquires singular greatness and religious fervour from its biblical inspiration. There is nothing in English poetry of this period which better recalls Dante's mystic visions or the refinements of feeling in Petrarch's sonnets.

The poet has lost his pearl, by which he means his daughter, a child two years old who was doubtless called Margaret, for such plays on words, originating in the Gospels, were frequent among mediæval theologians. He has lost her in a garden; she has passed through the grass into the ground, which means that she lies in the churchyard in her grave. Ever since, mourning and weeping, he has often gone to the place where she disappeared, and his grief has thus been somewhat allayed.

On an August day he goes to this garden, and in spite of the flowers and scents which make it delightful, he groans and wrings his hands, then lies down on the flowery ground and sinks into a dream which transports his soul into the realm of the marvellous.

He is carried to a glorious country bathed in unimaginable light, where the rocks are of crystal, the woods have leaves which shine like burnished silver, and pearls of the Orient are the gravel. He advances, to the sound of the joyous songs of birds with flaming plumage, until he comes to a river with beryl banks and a bed of pebbles which are precious stones:

> As glint through glass they glimmer'd and glow'd,
> As streamin stars, when dalesmen sleep,
> In the welkin shine, on a winter night.

It seems to him that Paradise must be on the farther side, but he seeks in vain for a bridge or ford by which he can cross. Then he perceives, on the other bank, a child "full debonair" and robed in glistening white. He recognizes that he has seen her already, and of a sudden his heart is filled with ineffable happiness. He can neither speak nor move, and fears that his least gesture may cause the vision to fade away. But the child herself rises and comes towards him, "so smooth, so small, so sweetly slight." Her white garments are bordered with precious stones; on her head there is a crown of white pearls; and a marvellous and flawless stone is fastened in the centre of her bosom. He understands that this is the pearl he has lost for so long. The child reproaches him gently for calling his pearl lost when she is in the beatitude

of Paradise. He would rejoice, were he a "gentle jeweller." He must not seek to reach her; the river between them is crossed only through death. But she tells him of her celestial life, her bliss as the spouse of the Lord. Is not the Kingdom of Heaven for little children? Her innocence has ensured eternal life to him. She is of the hundred and forty and four thousand virgins whom Saint John saw on the mount in New Jerusalem, clothed in their wedding garments.

The child cannot lead her father to the city of the blessed, but the Lamb has vouchsafed her the right to give him a sight thereof. She guides him towards the source of the river, while they walk on opposite banks, and he sees the city as the Apocalypse describes it, the white-robed procession of singing virgins, clothed in pearls, the Lamb in their midst, and the angels round about them. Then in the radiant host he perceives his little queen and would run to her, but the effort awakens him, and he finds himself once more in the churchyard, his head upon the grave-mound, dismayed and sighing but resigned to God's will. He cries that it is better thus, that he cannot wish to see his Pearl again, for she is better where she is.

The extent to which the poem borrows from the Apocalypse lessens its originality, the desire to edify overweights it, here and there, with didactic and theological passages, and the descriptions might be called too flamboyant. None the less, there is no other allegory of the time which unites so much fervour with such beauty. When compared with *Pearl,* the most charming of the contemporary allegories, the story of the daisy, who is Chaucer's Queen Alcestis, is frivolous, for all its refinement and delicious roguery, and the most powerful of them, *Piers Plowman,* is chaotic and formless. In *Pearl* everything is harmonised to glorify purity, and at the same time a human emotion, the father's grief, in turn rebellious and resigned, gives dramatic movement to the whole poem. Through all that is imitation and through the burdensome weight of doctrine, there shines a rare refinement of feeling. Something exquisite in the poet's senses makes him susceptible to nature even in his moments of most devout mysticism.

Nothing less than this sincere pathos, this wealth of imagination, could have put life into the difficult and complicated stanza which the poet adopts. His highly alliterative line has four



Illustration to "The Pearl," from a manuscript in the British Museum.

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accents in a very marked iambic rhythm. The stanza has twelve lines, as rigorously disposed as the lines of a sonnet. It is indeed a sonnet which concludes with two couplets instead of two tercets. Further, the hundred stanzas of the poem are in groups of five, associated because the last line of the first of them recurs in the others like a refrain, so that the final rhyme of the first stanza is repeated five times. And the last word of each stanza recurs at the beginning of the next.

These rules are both strict and puerile, and the fact deserves to be noted because it throws the greater simplicity of Chaucer's versification into relief. Moreover, it is indicative of the tendency to over-refinement which afflicted the author of *Pearl*, in his remote district and with his out-of-date vocabulary.

The two other poems, which are in the same manuscript and are therefore attributed to the same unknown author, *Purity* and *Patience*,[1] are both in alliterative verse and without rhyme or stanzas. *Purity* is an epic narrative of the Fall of the Angels, the Flood, the Angels' Visit to Abraham, the Feast of Balthazar and the Fall of Nebuchadnezzar. *Patience* recounts the life of Jonah. In both, purity and submission to the divine will are, as in *Pearl*, the principal themes. Although didactic they give much space to pictures, and the ample rhythm and style are in harmony with the grandiose descriptions, such as that of the Flood and that of the raging sea. A suspicion of humour sometimes finds its way into these poems, as when the poet describes Jonah's sojourn in the whale's belly, but on the whole he is both serious and fervent. His epic manner recalls Cynewulf, but has less verbal exuberance and a less fluid melody, a more concrete outline and more weightiness.

5. *William Langland and his "Piers Plowman."*—William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, the most popular, if the least artistic, poem, of the fourteenth century, also belongs to the west. It emanates, however, not from Lancashire but from the west midlands, and certain elements of its vocabulary are taken from the dialect of the south. But although the language is more difficult than Chaucer's, it is less outlandish than that of *Gawain*. The verse is purely alliterative: it is quite uncontaminated by French

[1] R. Morris, *Early English Alliterative Poems* (Early English Text Society, 1869). Extracts in Morris and Skeat, *Specimens* ("The Deluge," "The Destruction of Sodom"); R. J. Menner, *Purity* (Yale Univ Press, 1920).

versification and makes no concession to rhyme. On the other hand, the general form of the poem, a vision framing moral allegories, is borrowed from the Continent, so that this work is in the succession of the *Roman de la Rose*.

Yet how much it differs in spirit from the French poem! How national it is! How near the people! Its importance to the historian of morals and religion is such that it has called forth, even from literary critics, an admiration which is excessive in view of the lack in this work of the most elementary art.

That it appeared in three successive versions adds to the difficulty of studying it. There are three texts of very unequal length.[1] The first, the shortest and least formless, dates from 1362, so that it followed close on the Treaty of Brétigny and the great plague of 1361. The date of the second text is 1377, the last year of the reign of Edward III., when the Black Prince was dead and the child Richard heir to the throne. The third and considerably enlarged version belongs to the end of the century, between 1395 and 1398, when Richard II. had grown unpopular and was arousing the discontent of his subjects, particularly the London burghers, by his senseless prodigality.

Are these three texts the work of one or of three succeeding authors? Critics have posed the problem and it is still unsolved. The data given by the several texts certainly do not make it easy to construct a consistent life of the poet.

It appears that he was called William Langland, or Langley, and was born in Shropshire about 1330, that is six years after Wyclif and ten before Chaucer. He lived for some time in the Malvern Hills, then, tonsured but only in minor orders, he settled in London, in Cornhill, with his wife Kitte and his daughter Calote, and followed the craft of a public scribe. Certainly he knew the law courts and legal language. We have the picture of a tall, gaunt man with shaven crown, who passed haughtily along the streets, neither greeting the serjeants nor doing reverence to lords and ladies, and whom many took for a madman. Yet he also represents himself, not without irony, as a sort of beggar, going from door to door and pleading his tonsure to excuse him-

[1] They have been published in 2 vols. by W. W. Skeat (Oxford, 1886). Extracts of Text B in *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*, ed. W. W. Skeat (Oxford); J. Jusserand, *Les Anglais au Moyen âge: l'épopée mystique de William Langland* (Paris, 1893); J. M. Manly, "Piers the Plowman and Its Sequence," in *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. 2, chap. i.

self from working with his hands, earning a livelihood by singing a *Placebo* or a *Dirige* for those who gave him alms.

Whatever his life may have been, his work is that of a man of profoundly religious mind, who is indignant at the vices of a society Christian only in name. He gives first a satirical picture of the actual world, then a vision of the world as it would be if the teaching of the Gospel were truly practised. His poem may be summed up as a work of edification, never artistic in intention and very rarely so in fact.

We have seen that from the middle of the thirteenth century England had the habit of these social satires. The novelty of *Piers Plowman* consists in its ample scale, the relief into which certain realistic scenes are thrown in the course of the allegory, and the author's fervour and energy. His rare comprehension of the political and religious necessities of his time is also new. No less than Wyclif is he convinced of the need for a reform of the secular and regular clergy, although he does not follow Wyclif in dogmatic innovations. He recommends a parliamentary system in which the king, supported by the Commons, would govern for the public weal. The boldness and novelty of his thought are, in this century, often astonishing.

The qualities of mind and heart which we feel that he possessed could not but make his poem by turns vigorous and lofty. He had too such rude vital force and hearty irony that the scenes which animate his preaching are most intensely alive and full of movement.

He was, however, entirely without the art of construction or arrangement. He loses himself, and us with him, in his labyrinthine allegories and pictures. Confused even in the earliest version, his plan becomes more complicated and incoherent every time it is retouched, and to sketch the outline of the whole poem is almost impossible. Even to indicate the subject of each of its different parts is difficult.

Disguised as a shepherd, the poet falls asleep one May morning in the Malvern Hills, and has a vision of a vast field full of folk—poor and rich, workers and idlers, nobles and burghers, bad clerks and jesters. The crowd swarms as in a thronged market-place, a contrast to Chaucer's peaceful picture of his pilgrims. It seems to the dreamer that Lady Holychurch appears to him amid this disorder, and tells him that the crowd is

busied with things of the earth rather than things of heaven, that man's chief duty is to seek Truth, that Faith without works is nothing worth, that only love, otherwise Charity, leads to heaven.

When the crowd of sinners, now repentant, wish to set out for the sanctuary of Truth, no one knows the road, not even the palmer who has lately visited the most famous shrines. Was there ever a pilgrim who cared about Holy Truth? Then appears the person who names the poem, Piers Plowman. For fifty years he has served Truth by working, and from Conscience and Good Sense he has learnt the road. He offers to lead the pilgrims, first describing the allegorical country through which the way lies. The difficulties cause the most corrupt and cowardly to turn back. Then Piers announces that before he starts he must plough half an acre of land, and while he does this he gives advice to the "loveli ladies, with youre longe fyngres" to sew chasubles, and obliges everyone to follow his example. Those who seek to escape their task are reduced to obedience by Hunger's rough handling. In its first form the poem ends here with the poet's awakening, closing with a peroration on the small value of papal pardons and the greater efficacy, at the Last Judgment, of an upright life.

Within this frame there are, however, two almost detached episodes which are longer than itself and unconnected with each other. They are moralities in narrative form, each possessed of independent and real dramatic merit, and they are proof of close relations with the theatre of the time. They might be called two comedies, the Marriage of Lady Meed and the Confession of the Seven Deadly Sins.

Lady Meed is "wonderliche clothed," wearing rings of precious jewelry on all her fingers, and on her head a crown richer than the king's. She is a powerful but dubious personage whose name has been perverted by the evil times to a bad sense. It once meant due retribution but now means prevarication. She has a whole retinue of courtiers and flatterers who persuade her to evil. They prepare to wed her to False, and her marriage contract has been drawn up duly, when the opposition of Theology causes the business to be carried to London, to the king's court, where the righteous, by their own courage and the advice of Conscience and Reason, prevail upon the king to break off the marriage, and wreak justice upon the guilty, in spite of the devices

of the wicked and their bribery of royal officers. There follows a lively description of the flight of False and his company, who take refuge with the Pardoners, the Merchants, the Minstrels and the Friars, in turn, and are gladly harboured by all of them.

The Confession of the Seven Deadly Sins is the sequel to a sermon by Reason, who also invites all sinners to seek "seint Truth." It is only the homely realism of his descriptions of the Seven Deadly Sins which is personal to Langland—for these seven are everywhere in mediæval literature. Langland, however, makes them not abstractions but living beings, vitalised by the force of comedy and by many details taken from life. Of Covetousness and Gluttony he speaks with peculiar gusto. Abominable though the Sins may be, they yet are all capable of remorse. Repentance prays to God for all the kneeling sinners.

And have reuthe on thise Ribaudes that repente hem here sore,
That evere thei wratthed [1] the in this worlde in worde, thougte or dedes.

The poem, which was already crowded, was more than doubled in length when it was rewritten for the last time, and acquired a sequel in the shape of a number of visions, grouped by the poet under three titles, graduated so that they hold out the hope of a clear arrangement. Having shown the ills and vices of actual life, he produces a triple vision, *Do Well*, *Do Bet*, and *Do Best*. Unfortunately the benefit of the implied classification does not go beyond the titles. Elsewhere all is disorder, incoherence, chaos. Moreover, the sequel lacks the lively scenes which form the attraction of the first part. The last version of the poem, the only one extending to the end, is a preacher's amplification of the earlier text, the work of a Langland grown old, if not of a second or third author. The thought is as vigorous as ever, the tone has loftiness, often a new nobility, but the confusion is such that the work cannot be read continuously, and only a few fine passages stand out from the rest.

As the beginning of the poem recalls the morality-plays, so the sequel, which still has a dramatic turn, is often reminiscent of the mysteries. There is an imaginative effort to revivify the great scenes of the religious life. Passus XXI. in the third text is a dramatic narrative of the mysteries of the Passion and the Resur-

[1] angered.

rection which gives much space to dialogue, a play with magnified stage directions.

The scene is laid, as in the Mysteries, betwixt Heaven, Earth and Hell. Jews, soldiers, thieves, the multitude who acclaimed Jesus at his entry into Jerusalem: these stand for earth.

Heaven is a dramatisation of a verse of the Vulgate: "Mercy and Truth are met together; Justice and Peace have kissed each other." These abstractions have become angels, of whom some, severe and implacable, debate with others who are indulgent to human weaknesses, and all finally embrace, signifying thereby that Mercy will triumph over strict Justice.

Finally a loud voice is heard to cry upon Hell to open its gates, and Christ, resplendent with light, enters thither in spite of Satan.

These are the loftiest and most lyrical passages of the whole work. Like gems, they would gain by extraction from their matrix.

In this conclusion of the poem, Piers Plowman is not forgotten. He reappears, from time to time, but transfigured, changed to a symbol. Sometimes he seems to be confused with Christ Himself, who also was poor and worked with His hands; sometimes he represents the mass of the faithful. From pilgrim he has become the object of the pilgrimage. Conscience, awakening from long sleep, finally sets forth in quest of him.

Such, in brief, is this powerful and formless work. Whoever considers its ideas only, must give it high praise. Indignant at the degenerate Christianity of his century, Langland opposed to the practices of his time the essential and neglected virtues, especially work and charity. His attacks on the vices of the clergy are such as were common and current in the Middle Ages. There were precedents for them in the *Roman de la Rose* with Jean de Meung's *Faux Semblant,* not to go any farther. It should, however, be noted that the vice against which Langland's satire is especially directed is not Hypocrisy. Sloth and Avarice or Covetousness are rather the objects of his hatred. His satire, at its liveliest, is accompanied and directed by an intense religious fervour, unknown to de Meung and not found in Chaucer. He does not destroy but seeks sincerely to cleanse and rebuild. He is impelled not by the need to free his reason, but by the desire to strengthen and purify the moral life of himself and those about

him, and at the same time to rid political and social life of their worst iniquities. This aspiration, together with his choice of a ploughman for his hero, gives him the appearance of a rebel against the aristocratic system and social inequalities. But his real preoccupation is with the Christian life: the poor are nearer to Christ than others, less removed from Him by the vices to which idleness leads. Piers, who is a ploughman, is also the Christian; if he be not Christ Himself, he is at least one of the lowly of mankind, in whom Christ became incarnate and of whom He made His apostles.

As regards the form of this poem, Langland shows himself powerless to build up a harmonious whole, but able to create animated scenes, either comic or deeply pious. The vigorous and frank quality of his verses is striking. But partly because of his archaic versification and partly because of his real lack of art, his verses never thrill the sensibilities as poetry should. He is neither an artist nor a musician. These two deficiencies must modify his reputation, and while his work is of first-rate value to social historians, his literary merit is barely second-rate. In spite of the immense immediate popularity of his poem, he has almost no descendants. He is the last noteworthy writer of alliterative verse. A few imitations in the beginning of the fifteenth century, and, down to the sixteenth, a few sporadic essays which do not seem to derive from him: there was nothing more. English verse acquired fixed forms within his lifetime, not however from him but from Chaucer.

6. *Scotland. Barbour's "Bruce."* [1]—Meanwhile a change which had occurred in the northeast was fruitful of consequences. Northumbria had long been distinguished by the literature of the Angles, and, after a prolonged silence, had successively produced, in the first half of the fourteenth century, the *Cursor Mundi* and the *Pricke of Conscience* of Richard Rolle of Hampole, and Laurence Minot's war-songs. The dialect spoken south of the Tweed was debased, but between the Tweed and the Firth of Forth it became more than a dialect, the rich and productive national language which was Scots. From the tenth century onwards Scotland constituted a nation made of mixed elements: in the north Scots who had come from Ireland and Picts, Gaelic-

[1] Ed. by W. Skeat for the Early English Text Society Extracts in Morris and Skeat, op. cit., vol. ii.

speaking peoples without part in literature in English; between the Clyde and the Solway Britons and Saxons whose dialect was akin to that of Lancashire; in the Lothians English-speaking Northumbrians with an infusion of Scandinavians.

It was in the Lothians and the east of Scotland that that variety of literature in English which is Scottish literature developed and flourished, the literature of a people who for long were as much England's enemy as ever the French could be. The Scottish War of Independence from 1286 to 1342 made the Scots conscious of their nationality, and united the men north of the Tweed and the Esk in a hatred of England, which, as Minot's songs prove, the English were not slow to reciprocate.

Scotland had in her recent history heroes to celebrate—Sir William Wallace, the Douglas, Robert the Bruce—and their half-historical, half-legendary exploits seemed to force poetry into existence.

About the middle of the fourteenth century the language of Scotland was hardly distinguishable from the Northumbrian dialect. Its most special characteristic was the effect of a French influence due to the alliance between Edinburgh and Paris which, from the thirteenth century onwards, drew some French courtiers to Scotland and many Scots to France. As words taken directly from France, without passage through England, were adopted into the language, so the spirit of the French versifying chroniclers penetrated the literature more than in England.

The octosyllabic line was most held in honour in Scotland, and the general character of the poems shows that historical and practical sense which the Normans brought into literature in English. In its tone and form, Barbour's work is in the succession of all the tribe of rhymed chroniclers since Gaimar and Wace. But it was Barbour's fortune to find a national subject of powerful interest. His frank simplicity and ardent patriotism lead us to overlook the almost consistently prosaic character of the thirteen thousand lines of his *Bruce*.

John Barbour, archdeacon of Aberdeen, of whom nothing is known save that he made two journeys to England and two to France, composed a *Siege of Troy* and some lives of the saints, but it is by his *Bruce*,[1] written between 1375 and 1378, that he

[1] Ed. by W. Skeat for the Early English Text Society. Extracts by Morris and Skeat, *Specimens*, vol. ii. op. cit.

has earned his place in literature. This poem is to Scotland what the *Chanson de Roland* is to France, the surpassing national poem. The difference of the two in date is, however, such that the *Bruce* lacks the epical character of *Roland* and its element of the marvellous, and is a chronicle in verse, very nearly a history, its facts no more transformed than they would be by a patriot historian. It is not an epic but history, and recent history, hardly three-quarters of a century old when it was written, so that the author could get information from living witnesses. It is the work of a man who has investigated happenings and wishes to tell the truth. It was, as he states at the opening of his poem, his opinion that,

> Storys to rede are delitabill,
> Suppos that thai be nocht but fabill;
> Than suld storys that suthfast wer,
> Hawe doubill plesance in heryng
> . . . [1]
> :
> That schawys the thing rycht as it wes;
> And suth thyngis that ar likand
> Tyll [2] mannis heryng are plesand.
> Tharfor I wald fayne set my will,
> Giff [3] my wyt mycht suffice thartill,
> To put it wryt a suthfast story,
> That it lest ay and with in memory,
> Swa that na lenth of time it let,
> Na ger [4] it haly be ferget.

And Barbour's verses have indeed, by a singular and merited good fortune, become a source for all historians.

At the same time, Barbour is a moralist, and also an artist in so far that he is careful of the general unity of his work. Numerous as are the events about which he rhymes, he has only one hero, Robert the Bruce, the centre of the whole poem, and he intends that one moral idea shall reign over his whole work. The Bruce began his glorious career by a criminal act, by slaying a traitor at the foot of the altar in a place of sanctuary. This is Barbour's opening. The Bruce's heart will therefore not rest in the Holy Land according to his desire: this is the conclusion of the poem.

There is a greater amplitude in the ideas of freedom, patriotism and independence which animate all these verses.

[1] Telling. [2] To. [3] If. [4] Make.

For the work is one of those in which matter is infinitely more important than manner. The subject in its naked simplicity is more arresting and wonderful than the most romantic imaginings of the Middle Ages. Nothing is more moving than this story of a struggle for independence maintained by a people fewer in number than their oppressors, whose yoke they had already felt, and who had seized their strong places and overrun their country with soldiers.

Deliverance sprang from the lowest depth of misery, when the Bruce took to the open country and for years led the life of a hunted beast, hidden in the mountains and perpetually in danger of capture, escaping by killing his assailants with his own hands, by climbing barefoot over sharp cliffs, by the cunning with which he divined and forestalled the traps laid for him. At last, he fled to the small island of Rachin, and thence returned at the head of a growing company, which finally, in 1314, won the great victory of Bannockburn over Edward II. and secured the independence of Scotland.

Step by step, Barbour follows his hero through the struggle. He does not obtrude himself but leaves facts, which he knows to be more moving than all the rhetoric of poets, to speak for themselves. If he interrupts his narrative, it is to draw from the past lessons useful to the present. He wrote at a time when the glory of Bannockburn had been tarnished by sanguinary defeats. The misfortunes of his country in the first years of the Bruce's career had come of dissensions and of a foolish appeal to the king of England to decide the disputed succession to the Scottish throne, and Barbour would have his countrymen remember this:

And wys men sayis he is happy,
That be othir will him chasty.[1]
For unfayr thingis may fall, perfay,
Als weill tomorn as yhisterday.

He would have Scotland keep for ever the freedom that is of greater worth "than all the gold in world that is":

A! fredome is a noble thing!
Fredome mays man to haiff liking;
Fredome all solace to man giffis:
He levys at es[2] that frely levys.

[1] That will chasten himself by (the example) of others. [2] Ease.

7. *The Dialect of the East Midlands or King's English. John Gower.*—However important literary production, in the dialects we have reviewed, may have been, no one of them triumphed over the others. Victory fell to the speech of the east midlands, the district of London and the two universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and that in which the king had his residence. For this reason this language has been called the King's English. Its pre-eminence was established once for all in the end of the fourteenth century.

Although to-day this victory seems quite natural, since social forces were already making London the political and social centre, the universities the intellectual centre of the nation, the dialect of the east midlands was perhaps, when it was on the very eve of becoming English like none other, the poorest, the most completely disinherited of literature. Since Anglo-Saxon times, almost all English poetry had been produced apart from it. It could boast of hardly a poem besides the romance of *Havelock* and Robert Manning's *Handlyng Sinne.* Reflection shows that the fact is not astonishing, for it was in the neighbourhood of the court and the universities that the English language was most degraded and existed most precariously, that it was always subordinate either to Latin or to French or rather Anglo-Norman. King, nobles and clerks despised it. French, long the only tongue of any outside the vulgar herd, had its natural stronghold in this district, and was more tenacious of life here than elsewhere. Men better endowed than their fellows avoided the common language or had recourse to it only for practical ends. Their literary ambitions did not find scope in a tongue which was so meanly prized.

The case of John Gower [1] is very representative of prevalent conditions. He used Latin and French in turn, and reached the point of writing in English only late, probably under the influence of Chaucer's success. The date of his birth is unknown. Was he, as was long believed, some ten years older than Chaucer, or was he his junior? He died eight years after him, in 1408, and was probably his exact contemporary. The work of the two poets grew side by side, and, although Gower is not without merit of

[1] Complete edition in four volumes of his works, ed by G. C Macaulay (Clarendon Press, 1899-1902), *Confessio Amantis*, ed. by Henry Morley (1899).

his own, he is chiefly valuable because he serves to measure the greatness of his rival.

He was a Kentishman, but this origin had only a slight effect on his language, which is hardly at all different from that of London and the court. He was a gentleman, possibly a clerk who did not take major orders. He was well read, and his library, if the word may be used, seems to have contained much the same French and Latin books as Chaucer's.

Undoubtedly he was once young, for he wrote love ballades in English-French, ballades which lack fire but are not without a certain grace. This was a lover on the courtly model, seeking in vain to touch an unfeeling heart:

> En le douls temps ma fortune est amière,
> Le mois de Maij sest en yverne mué;
> Lurtie truis si jeo la Rose quière,
> Vous êtes franche et jeo suis fort lié.[1]
> (*Ballade* xxxvii.)

The third line at least needs translation—

> I find the nettle when I look for the rose—

for its language is not Parisian. He is aware of the fact and excuses himself for it:

> Et si je n'ai du français la faconde,
> Pardonnez-moi je de ce fors voie,[2]
> Je suis Anglais; si quiers par telle voie[3]
> Etre excusé . . .

The very rhythm of his French verse tends to be Anglicised, to beat time to the iambic measure. In spite of his effort after correctness, Gower proves better than anyone else how artificial was this uprooted language, at once learned and corrupt. He reminds us of Chaucer's Prioress:

> And Frensch sche spak ful faire and fetysly,
> After the scole of Stratford attë Bowe,
> For Frensch of Paris was to hire unknowe.

Gower is the last in date of the Anglo-Norman poets. He deserves to rank among them less by a few little love-pieces than

[1] In the sweet season my fate is bitter,
The month of May has changed into winter;
I find the nettle when I look for the rose;
You are free whereas I am fast bound.

[2] I go astray.

[3] And therefore I beg.

by his long poem, or rather his long sermon in verse, which is called *Speculum Meditantis*, or *Miroir de l'Homme*, and has recently been rediscovered. It is a sermon against the immorality of the age, and it justifies Chaucer's epithet of "moral Gower" which was to cling to his friend's name for ever. This clerk, concerned especially to note and display the vices of his generation, was indeed much more a moralist than a poet. He is without a trace of that joy in life and pleasure in observing it which are so vivid in Chaucer. He compares what he sees with his ideal, that of a pious clerk and a student, finds all abominable, and condemns unreservedly.

Thus it was with his most remarkable work, *Vox Clamantis*, which was inspired by the Peasants' Rising of 1381 and which he elected to write in Latin. It is a very substantial poem which has real historic value, a pendant to *Piers Plowman* written by a member of the wealthy class, by a frightened landlord whose misfortune it was to live in Kent, the county in which the formidable rebellion broke out. Gower's terror gives these verses a strength and emphasis which are lacking in his other work.

This rising under Wat Tyler and Jack Straw began near Gower's land, and more than one of his tenants was doubtless among the rebels. It was during the first years of the minority of Richard II. The impoverishment of the Treasury, the levy of new subsidies for an unfortunate war and the insolence of the farmers of the taxes had provoked popular anger and rebellion. Several tax-collectors were put to death, and after them lawyers, courtiers, and partisans of the real regent, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. The number of the rebels increased. One hundred thousand men marched on London, demanding the abolition of serfdom and the reduction of rents. A true social revolution had been let loose in the country, and for a moment the insurgents were masters of London, where they sacked the palaces of the Archbishop of Canterbury and John of Gaunt. They destroyed but they did not steal: they even hanged a man in their own ranks for theft. Then the king rode out to meet them, and Wat Tyler, while in parley with him, was slain by the mayor. The king procured the dispersal of the rebels by promising redress of their grievances, then revoked his promise, and the rising was ended by cruel repressive measures.

Gower, now in his fifties, was haunted by this rebellion as by

a nightmare. His interests were all on the side of the landlords. He had no sympathy with the popular cause, yet considered the ills of society to be the outcome of social vices which were ruining the state. His alarms and his grievances are voiced in the Latin distichs of *Vox Clamantis*.

The poet first has a vision of a crowd of members of the populace changed into wild beasts and uncurbed by reason—asses, fierce as lions, who will bear no more burdens, oxen who refuse to draw the plough, dogs who bark at huntsmen, cats who have reverted to wildness. A jay, who stands for Wat Tyler, harangues them, to the sound of shouts of "Down with honour! Perish the law!" and at the tail of their company John Ball, an excommunicate priest, preaches on the text:

> When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then a gentleman?

The swarming mass of people lays Troynovant, or London, waste. Its strength is broken by the death of the jay, but the ship of the state is still adrift and puts in at the island of Disorder. Then a voice from Heaven advises Gower to write down what he has seen in his nightmare.

The rest of his poem contains his waking thoughts and is entirely didactic. The misfortunes of the age spring from the general corruption. There are three classes of society, the clerks, the warriors, otherwise knights and nobles, and the third estate, namely the villeins and labourers, the traders and the lawyers. All are riddled with vice. The court is a meeting-place for everything abominable.

The poem ends with a prayer to the young king, Richard II., to bring virtue back to the court, and with an appeal to all men to mend their ways, remembering how short is earthly life. Gower declares his love for his country: he has wished, he says, that men should hear not only what he himself feels to be true, but also the voice of the people, which is often the voice of God.

It is a great pity that this work, into which Gower has put the best of himself, his utmost sincerity of thought, vehemence of satire and depths of narrow but coherent morality, should have received the dress of a dead language, while on the one occasion when he used the speech of his country he worked against the

grain of his temperament and talent, and wrote an entirely artificial poem.

For he did finally make up his mind to write in English, perhaps incited by the growing reputation of Chaucer, who had already produced most of his works and was soon to begin the *Canterbury Tales.* It was about 1383 or 1384 that Gower composed his single English poem, his *Confessio Amantis,* an immense compilation of stories extending to forty thousand octosyllabic lines. He tells us he did it at the bidding of King Richard, who charged him that "some newē thing I shuldē boke," and thus he excuses his use of the vulgar tongue:

And for that fewē men endite
In oure Englisshe, I thenkē make
A bok for King Richardes sake.

He has the credit of having sought, a little before Chaucer, a thread on which to string some hundred stories. The idea was not quite new: it had been exemplified in the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent de Beauvais, the *Gesta Romanorum* and the *Sept Sages,* to which the *Decameron* would have to be added, were it not clearly unknown to Gower as to Chaucer. The idea was a happy one, but how awkwardly Gower executed it!

He tells us with a sigh that he is going to sing of love, rather than follow his own taste and write a moral book. Love is the last subject he would choose for himself, but something must be conceded to the reader who prefers amusement to wisdom:

For thilkē cause, if that ye rede,
I wolde go the middel wey
And write a boke betwene the twey,
Somwhat of lust, somwhat of lore.

It happens that Venus, who has little fondness for him, advises him one day in May to make his confession to her priest Genius. The obedient poet goes to the confessional and asks Genius to question him, point by point, thus sounding his conscience in the article of love. Genius consents, but declares that, in order that the confession may be complete, he will be obliged, in the course of the examination, to speak of the different vices. He will explain each of them by means of a story, so that the lover may know whether or no he have the same guilt on his conscience. When the confession has ended, Venus mocks this superannuated lover, who decides to withdraw.

The device allows the seven deadly sins, subdivided into many secondary sins, to defile through seven books. Genius has received a complete scholastic education, but he ceases to excel when he endeavours to adapt his examples to his precepts. To illustrate hypocrisy he tells the tale of the deceiving Trojan Horse. To show that murder, an effect of anger, is to be condemned, he relates the story of Pyramus and Thisbe: Pyramus kills himself out of despair, which is anger, when he believes that Thisbe has been the lion's victim, and the moral is that nothing should be done in a hurry. The proof that carelessness is injurious to love is found in the story of Phaeton, who drove his father's chariot carelessly, freezing and burning the earth by turns, so that Phœbus caused him, as a punishment, to fall from the chariot and be drowned.

The connection of these stories with the morality of love is so absurd that, after praising Gower for attempting a unified plan, we are tempted to regret that he did not write his little stories haphazard, without trying to give them a frame. For as a narrator he is abundant and clear, and since he has read much, he has had no difficulty in finding curious and sometimes attractive stories among his books. Several of his tales recur in Chaucer, who sometimes preceded and sometimes followed him in selecting them. Once or twice Gower was inspired by a better original than Chaucer, as when he took the story of the Knight Florent which corresponds to the tale of the Wife of Bath.

This is as much as can be claimed for Gower. An almost immeasurable distance separates him from Chaucer. He is doing penance when he obliges himself to treat of love, undertaking a task so ungrateful and so contrary to his nature that he could have discharged it well only with the help of the sense of humour he lacked deplorably. Like him, Chaucer posed as despised by Venus and ill-used by Cupid, but—not to speak of his unrivalled and unfailing power to awaken sympathy for lovers—his confession of impotence is delightful because it is wrapped in humour. In Gower, there are, or seem to be, velleities of humour, but they are invariably abortive. There is too much reality in the awkwardness with which this poet resigns himself to his distasteful subject. Once and again, a sigh escapes him because he cannot return to the moral teaching natural to him, and these regrets are the sincerest part of his poem. He is indeed, as Chaucer said, "moral

Gower," and it is unfortunate that he ever forsook his rôle. Venus was right when she told him:

And tarie thou mi Court nomore
But go ther vertu moral dwelleth,
Where ben thi bokes, as men telleth,
Whiche of long time thou hast write.

And we are grateful to Gower for having made the goddess own Chaucer for her true disciple and poet:

Of ditēs and songēs glad
The whiche he for my sakē made
The land fulfilled is over al.

Gower, learned, industrious and copious, is the typical average poet of his century. His writings are what Chaucer's might have been without Chaucer's genius.

CHAPTER II

GEOFFREY CHAUCER (1340?-1400) [1]

1. *Chaucer best expresses his Century.*—All the writers o this time reveal some aspect of contemporary life and of prevail ing feeling and thought. The author of *Pearl* shows us th mysticism of refined minds, Langland the anger which was threat ening the abuses of governments and the vices of the clergy Wyclif the ardour for religious reform which already coul amount to Protestantism, Gower the fear aroused in the wealthie class by the Peasant Rising, Barbour the break between the litera ture of Scotland and of England and the advent of patrioti Scottish poetry. Each had his own plan, his dominant and, o the whole, narrow passion, a character which was local and of hi time. Each was enclosed within the limits of a restricted experi ence, if not within those of a dialect incapable of expansion an without a future.

It is Chaucer's distinction that he turned impartial, eager an clear-sighted eyes not only on the past, which his books discovere to him, but also on all the society of his time, on foreign countrie and on every class in his own country. His work reflects his cen tury not in fragments but completely. More than this, he is ofte able to discern permanent features beneath the garments of a day to penetrate to the everlasting springs of human action. Hi

[1] *Complete Works*, ed. W. Skeat, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1896), and supplementar vol. (1897); *The Student's Chaucer*, ed. Skeat, complete in 1 vol. (Oxford, 1895) Globe Edition, ed. A. W. Pollard (1903); Bibliogr. by Miss Hammond, supple mented by Griffith (University of Washington, 1926). Many works on Chaucer Works of the Chaucer Society from 1868 (1st series, 99 volumes; 2nd series, 5 volumes, in 1922); J. R. Lowell, paper in *My Study Windows* (1871); A. W Pollard, *A Primer of Chaucer* (1893); R. K. Root, *The Poetry of Chaucer* (1906 revised ed., 1922); E. Legouis, *Chaucer* (Grands Ecrivains Etrangers, 1910) G. L. Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry* (1915); *Some New Light on Chaucer* by J. M. Manly (New York, 1925), etc. See works on English Literature of Taine Jusserand, Ten Brink, etc. For Chaucer's sources, see E. G. Sandras, *Etude su Chaucer considéré comme imitateur des Trouvères* (Paris, 1859). For Chaucer' influence, C. Spurgeon, *Chaucer devant la critique en Angleterre et en France depui son temps jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris, 1911), and *Five Hundred Years of Chauce Criticism and Allusion* (Chaucer Society, Second Series, 1918-22).

truthful pictures of his age and country contain a truth which is of all time and all countries.

He was born in London about 1340, the son of a city wine-merchant, and therefore by birth a member of the burgher class. At seventeen, however, he was a court page, for whom a pair of red and black breeches was provided. Two years later he became a soldier, took part in the campaigns of Artois and Picardy, was captured by the enemy and remained a prisoner until the king paid his ransom. After his return to England he was attached to the king's person, first as valet and then as squire, but his great patron was John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and son of Edward III. From the age of about thirty he was charged with diplomatic missions to France, Flanders and Italy, in succession. He was granted a pension and also, in 1374, the office of comptroller of the duties and aids on wools, hides and wine in the port of London. In this way, as a courtier, he was again brought into touch with the London burghers among whom he had been born. In 1385 he was released from his office of comptroller, and in the next year he was returned to Parliament as a knight of the shire of Kent.

Lancaster's disgrace supervened, and Chaucer fell on evil days. He lost his place and part of his pension, but was accorded other favours when the duke returned to power. For a time he was Clerk of the King's Works at Windsor, and by Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, he was made forester. He relapsed to poverty; but his fortunes recovered just before his death in 1400, when the son of John of Gaunt usurped the throne as Henry IV.

Thus his life was active and his employments diverse. He was page, squire, diplomat and official in turns. He mingled with courtiers, soldiers and city burghers and merchants. He had dealings with foreigners in Flanders, France and Italy. And throughout he remained, for such part of his days as his official duties left free, an impassioned student and untiring reader.

What is most striking in Chaucer is the interest he took in every one of the different worlds through which he passed and all his heterogeneous occupations. He was at his ease at court, among traders, among clerks, with the people. To observe was as much his joy as to read. It is inconceivable that there was an hour of his life whence he did not extract pleasure. He could bear a heavy burden of work easily, with the air of an idler whose life is all pleasure. The literary work he accomplished is con-

derable in extent, but far more remarkable for the radi- ice of his sympathy and the length and breadth of his clear sion.

2. *His part in the Formation of English Poetry.*—We know othing of the work of artistic preparation which is to be pre- umed from Chaucer's success in poetry, but it was indubitably itense and long. Genius doubtless accounts for the lengths by which his poetry outdistanced Gower's, but *something is due to* he persevering will of an artist who gave himself unstintingly to he acquisition of necessary technique. Alone among his con- emporaries, Chaucer put art first. He did not seek to direct men, o judge events, to reform morals or to present a philosophy. Poetry was his only object. Up to the very end, the task he set himself was to write verses which should have charm and life. To realise the immense effort which this involved it is only necessary to remember the state in which he found the versification and the poetic language of his dialect.

It is hardly possible to exaggerate the part he played as creator of English versification. Save the frail octosyllabic line already in use, he had himself to forge all his instruments. He imported the decasyllabic line from France and, under Italian influence, made it pliable. It became the heroic line which was the surpassing vehicle of the great poetry of England. We have seen that the progress of this poetry was barred by the lack of a verse-form at once ample, ductile, noble and sonorous. Chaucer used the new line alternately in stanzas and in couplets, the stanza for songs and the couplet for narratives. He cast it in moulds unknown to his country—the roundel, the virelay, the ballade. Out of all his essays two came to dominate: the seven-lined stanza (*ababbcc*), to which his name has since attached, and the couplet. But what fashioning and refashioning, what experiments and doubts, this presupposes! All his youth and part of his maturity must have been mainly dedicated to this labour which, since nearly all his earliest works are lost, cannot be traced.

His immediate choice of his own dialect as the vehicle of his poetry is proof of his decision and of his sure judgment. He did not, like Gower, allow himself to be tempted either by Latin or by French. He risked his whole literary fortune on London English, the King's English, of which it has been said how poor it was. He found it a thing of nought and left it so rich that English

poetry had but *to add blank verse to it in order to be fully* equipped.

Chaucer's first act of faith in the only tongue which was to him a living language, notwithstanding he clearly saw its defects, was to inculcate in it all the delicacy and refinement he perceived in the poetry of France. He disregarded the debased, artificial and prosaic Anglo-Norman, and went straight to the Continent to seek *masters and models.*

To wed the vocabulary of his native land to the courtliness of France was his first and essential task. He recast English words —that is, surviving words of Teutonic origin and acclimatised words of French origin—in the moulds of the French poets. He expressed in English all the graces and refinements he found in the poetry of France.

Unlike the authors of the Grene Knyght and *Piers Plowman,* he definitely broke with the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition. His face was turned to the south, and he took the whole of his ideal from the Continent.

He might be thought unlucky in his time. There never was a period in which French poetry was apparently more frail and destitute than that which intervenes between Rutebeuf and Villon or between the *Roman de la Rose* and Charles d'Orléans. In this poor, meagre and pretentious garden there was little but *artificial flowers to cull.* *And, because of the accident of date,* it was from one of the most debilitated of the French poets, Guillaume de Machaut, that Chaucer took his first lessons. He could learn from him neither animation nor vigour, nor frankness of style, nor strength of feeling and thought. But Machaut was refined, as much a musician as a poet. *Although not a great* artist he was yet pure artist, and well fitted to give the young *Englishman the teaching he needed in the rules of his craft.* In France, it was Machaut who chiefly propagated the poems made in fixed forms, the ballades, roundels, *chansons royales,* and it was from him that Chaucer learned to use these forms for his lyrical verses. For his narratives and descriptions he is no less in debt to Machaut's lays. *He often also emulates those French* pupils of Machaut who were his contemporaries, Eustache Deschamps, Froissart, Otto de Granson. His work is full of details borrowed here and there. He followed with slightly ironic curiosity a tenson on the comparative merits of the Leaf and the

Flower. He took part in the symbolic cult of the Marguerite or daisy, which in the second half of this century, out of deference to some great ladies named after that flower, superseded that of the Rose.

Nevertheless, it was above all to the *Roman de la Rose* that he owed his initiation as a poet. At some unknown moment of his life, probably as his youth was ending, he translated the famous *Roman* into English verse. It is not unlikely that he produced the version of which we possess a part, and which is most faithfully and exactly translated. This was excellent practice, calculated to bring discipline into the versification and style of a young poet. If he did not always attain to such fresh colours and sonorous rhymes as Guillaume de Lorris, it is that he was hindered by his interpreter's task and by a language as yet unformed. He was conscious of the fact. He complained that "ryme in Englisch hath such skarsetë," and meanwhile he practised to such good purpose that he brought nearer the day when this difficulty disappeared.

The *Roman de la Rose* did more for him than discipline his style. It was the work which had the most comprehensive and constant hold on him. Its double character, due to the difference, amounting to contrast, between the two poets who composed it, did not shock Chaucer as an interruption of unity, but made this work—this Bible of poetry—doubly attractive to him. According to his mood, he was inspired by Guillaume de Lorris or by Jean de Meung. Guillaume, with his delicate grace and the clarity of his atmosphere of love, caught him first, in his youth. Later it came to pass that the flood of ideas, satire and classical reminiscences, which rolls through the work of Jean de Meung, was better suited to his need of more solid and humorous nourishment, and this poet began and continued to charm him more than any other, so that he borrowed from him again and again, even for his final masterpiece.

The first effect of the *Roman* was, however, in one sense to pervert his genius while it helped to fashion his style. It led him into the sphere of the allegorical and kept him there for many years. Chaucer's reverence for this poem was such that it delayed the flowering of his dramatic genius, which he neglected until after his journey to Italy. Such prolonged restraint would be more regrettable had he not produced some entirely charming

works in the form of allegories, and had his art not gained by the slow process of cultivation and ripening to which it was subject when, as it were, he put himself to school. Only after these trials did he risk the hard enterprise, often so dangerous to formal beauty, of representing life directly.

His debt to France goes beyond the many imitations which can be discovered in his work, the reminiscences of the trouvères in lines, reflections, descriptive touches, opinions or quips. He owes another debt to France which is vaster, more diffused through his poetry, less easy to apprehend but not less certain. He is no mere recipient of her largess. She has bequeathed to him a whole heritage, not isolated possessions but his very nature. His mind is as French as his name, which is a form of *chaussier*. He is the lineal descendant of the French trouvères, one of them in all but language.

It was not that he gallicised his grammar or vocabulary more than his contemporaries. But this first great literary artist of his country attempted to express in his own language the poetic beauty which he felt in the best French verses and which answered to his urgent instinctive need. This ideal, to which he attained, was the very inverse of that of the scops

As the reader passes from their works to his, he has again, in striking degree, the impression of dawning clarity which he received when he left Anglo-Saxon for old French poetry. The rarefied, white light shed over Chaucer's work, hardly ever touching the violent colours of more southern poetry, is exactly the same in tone as that which shone for the poets of the Ile-de-France. A Frenchman may enter Chaucer's country and be conscious of no change of sky or climate.

Like the French trouvères, Chaucer has a lightness of heart which is not tumultuous but diffused. It is born of his pleasure in life and is revealed by his taste for the well-lit pictures which call up spring, the month of May, flowers, birds and music. One line, in which he resumes the youth of his Squire, might be the device of all his poetry:

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This line is entirely French, the essence of the earliest French poetry.

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This line is entirely French, the essence of the earliest French poetry.

The same may be said of his pitch, neither too high nor too

low. His voice, too, has a pure, slightly frail quality. He never forces his tone; rather, he sometimes uses a mute. It is an even voice, made to tell a long story without weariness or jar, perhaps not rich or full enough for the highest lyricism, but wont to keep to the middle tones in which meaning is conveyed to the mind most clearly and exactly.

There is the charm of fluent simplicity, complete correspondence of words and thoughts. Chaucer's best verses merely note facts, external details or characteristics of feeling.

There is constant restraint, alike in expressing emotion and satire. When he touches the pathetic, he stops short of cries and weeping; he tempers his irony with wit, and he provokes smiles rather than unchecked laughter. Everywhere there are undefinable sobriety and good manners which imply that the poet is ruled by intelligence, rather than carried away by passion. In other words, his temperamental and intellectual powers are perfectly balanced.

All these qualities belong, in the same measure, to the old French poets and to Chaucer. His French extraction is proved by his possession of all of them, and by the fact that he goes beyond them only at those rare moments when, under an Italian influence, he rises above both his own nature and French nature. When Chaucer forsakes France he is a little denaturalised.

It should be added that with the virtues of the French trouvères he has the faults from which the best of them are not exempt. Like them, he too often does not condense, is garrulous, often charmingly but yet indisputably. There are times when he lacks the sinew and the pace which an occasion demands, when he dawdles instead of hastening his steps, walks instead of flying. His discreet poetry is near the border-line of prose; it has its awkward, slow and platitudinous moments. There is padding at which we smile, but which we must recognise for what it is. Again like the old French poets, Chaucer has, however, a good-humoured, artless way with him, which makes all these manifest defects into an additional attraction. Sometimes he even uses them to point his sharpest quip.

These characteristics do not belong only to his youth, but are permanent in him. Chaucer cannot be said to have had a French period. He is always French, although he sometimes gathered riches abroad, as he marvelled at antiquity or at Italy. Funda-

mentally unchanged, he acquired from the Italians and Latins a certain adventitious diversity, and ended by using his French manner to paint the society of England.

3. *His Lyrical and Allegorical Poems.*—Chaucer seems to have begun his work by composing love lyrics, but nothing remains of his earliest poetry. There are, however, enough of his roundels and ballades, written at a later date in moments spared from his more ambitious poems, to prove the virtuosity of which he was capable in this field. He was certainly the equal of the most skilled of his fellows in France, and often he imported a characteristic of his own into these conventional forms—his pity, always moved by the sufferings of a woman, in the *Compleynt of Anelida,* the savour of his homeliness, or his humour which makes jests against himself. In his *Ballade of Griselidis,* which is his triumph in the field of lyricism, he mingles the extreme artifice of a learned craftsman with the most comic sportiveness. But in these works he merely gives, as in play, some proofs of his mastery of their style. He turns from them to that domain of narrative in verse which is properly his and in which he did almost all his work.

It took him a long time to decide on direct narrative. He could not at first rid himself of the poetic artifices of the age. From the time of the *Roman de la Rose* every poem begins with a dream which leads to an allegory, and for many years Chaucer let himself be carried along by this current. He accepted the received formula almost as though it were a necessity, submitted to such restraint without apparent effort, merely inserting, from time to time, an episode or a detail which expressed his nature or is the medium of his comments.

The first of his poems which can be dated is the *Boke of the Duchesse,* written on the death, in 1369, of Blanche of Lancaster, the wife of John of Gaunt, in order to sing her praises and depict the grief of her husband. This voluminous and composite funeral monument, astonishing to-day by the artificial rather than ingenious complexity of its plan, yet reveals, here and there, the poet's nature. Flowers which are fair, fresh and delicate grow abundantly between the stones of this flamboyant architecture. In the poem Chaucer represents himself as a lover racked by sleeplessness, reading from the *Metamorphoses* the touching story of Ceyx and Alcyone. When finally he does fall asleep, he dreams that he

low. His voice, too, has a pure, slightly frail quality. He never forces his tone; rather, he sometimes uses a mute. It is an even voice, made to tell a long story without weariness or jar, perhaps not rich or full enough for the highest lyricism, but wont to keep to the middle tones in which meaning is conveyed to the mind most clearly and exactly.

There is the charm of fluent simplicity, complete correspondence of words and thoughts. Chaucer's best verses merely note facts, external details or characteristics of feeling.

There is constant restraint, alike in expressing emotion and satire. When he touches the pathetic, he stops short of cries and weeping; he tempers his irony with wit, and he provokes smiles rather than unchecked laughter. Everywhere there are undefinable sobriety and good manners which imply that the poet is ruled by intelligence, rather than carried away by passion. In other words, his temperamental and intellectual powers are perfectly balanced.

All these qualities belong, in the same measure, to the old French poets and to Chaucer. His French extraction is proved by his possession of all of them, and by the fact that he goes beyond them only at those rare moments when, under an Italian influence, he rises above both his own nature and French nature. When Chaucer forsakes France he is a little denaturalised.

It should be added that with the virtues of the French trouvères he has the faults from which the best of them are not exempt. Like them, he too often does not condense, is garrulous, often charmingly but yet indisputably. There are times when he lacks the sinew and the pace which an occasion demands, when he dawdles instead of hastening his steps, walks instead of flying. His discreet poetry is near the border-line of prose; it has its awkward, slow and platitudinous moments. There is padding at which we smile, but which we must recognise for what it is. Again like the old French poets, Chaucer has, however, a good-humoured, artless way with him, which makes all these manifest defects into an additional attraction. Sometimes he even uses them to point his sharpest quip.

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is present at a hunt of the Emperor Octavian, and that while endeavouring to follow it he discovers in a wood a handsome knight, all clothed in black, who is mourning and who describes to him the charms of his lost and well-beloved wife, and the ineffable joy he knew during his too brief union with her.

As though to assert its origin, the poem abounds with imitations of the *Roman de la Rose* and Machaut's *Dits*. It is, moreover, an occasional poem, inspired by the desire to please the Duke of Lancaster by transfiguring his grief. It suffers from prolixity and makes, at a first reading, an impression of some confusion. Nevertheless, whoever reads it, remembering its date, and compares it with the existing English verse, is struck by the progress it marks. It is the first poem in this language to contain fully artistic passages. The lines which are the farewell of the phantom Ceyx and relate the death of Alcyone are the perfection of simple pathos. Nothing could surpass their harmonious tenderness, their exquisite restraint and the grace and aptness of their divisions and their rhymes:

> "And farewel, swete, my worldës blissë!
> I prayë God your sorwë lissë:
> To litel whyl our blissë lasteth."
> With that hir eyen up she casteth
> And saw nought: "Ah," quod she for sorwë
> And deyd within the thriddë morwë.

Over and over again the allegory gives place to realism. A conversation, on the whole both probable and lively, is held between the poet and the unknown knight, and if this partly dramatic character of the poem be given full value, it will be seen to modify its defects, and even to excuse them by giving them probability. The mourner's prolixity and repetitions and his confused enumeration of his lady's virtues are in place in this sudden outpouring of his feelings. They make the picture appear less circumscribed and didactic. There is a pathetic element in the very exuberance and incoherence of this overflowing sorrow. Already, too, there is a hint of humour in the appearance of the questioner, the poet himself, who figures, on this his first coming into his own poetry, as a man "of little wit," slow of understanding, amazed by the spectacle of a strong passion of which the lyricism is beyond him.

Chaucer was again to have recourse to allegory in 1382,

when he wished to celebrate the betrothal of Richard II. and Anne of Bohemia, this being the probable subject of his *Parlement of Foules*. The frame is even more heavily laden than is that of the *Boke of the Duchesse*, for Chaucer had read much between the dates of the two poems, and had added Latin and Italian models to those he found in France; for instance, Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* and Boccaccio's *Teseide*. He again represents himself as falling asleep after reading. This time his book is the *Somnium Scipionis*, and it is Scipio in person who appears to him in his dream to lead him to marvellous gardens where Venus has her temple, but where Nature is "the vicaire of thalmightye lorde." It is the fourteenth of February, St. Valentine's Day, and Nature enjoins the male birds to choose their mates. She holds in her own hand a female eagle of great beauty who shall, with her own consent, go to the worthiest.

The interest of the poem lies in its variety of moods, its transitions from the lofty to the homely. Nature holds a full parliament: there are the lords, namely, the eagles and other birds of prey, who express the most delicate sentiments ever heard in courts of love, and there are the commons of winged society, the water-fowl, the eaters of worms or grain, who are deaf to chivalrous eloquence and voice coarse and selfish good sense. This diversity of tone gives unexpected dramatic liveliness to the narrative. The comic is allied with the purely romantic, so that in the *Parlement of Foules* there is the germ of that antithesis between the ideal and the real which is the special glory of the *Canterbury Tales*. We are already confronted with a scene in the human comedy, and with the impartiality of this narrator, who has, doubtless, a preference for noble sentiments, but makes it his duty to leave room for other feelings beside them. Even while he chides the materialists, he is plainly aware of their good sense, and uses them to denounce the slightly forced element in the refinements of courtly love.

The same quality saves and redeems Chaucer's most ambitious effort in the field of allegorical poetry, his *Hous of Fame*, in which he seems to have wished to compete with the *Roman de la Rose*, raising as ample a symbolical structure. His avowed object is to tell of the capricious nature of glory, and the strange fashion in which rumour and news are fabricated and spread in the world. To shed light on this theme, he has recourse to all

the customary machinery. The action of the poem is introduced with extreme slowness. There is a discussion on the origin and truth of dreams. The god of sleep is duly invoked. At last comes the dream itself; the poet finds himself in the temple of Venus where he sees the whole story of Æneas painted on the walls. A golden eagle carries him aloft in a giddy flight to the House of Fame, which is reared in the heavens and accessible to all the sounds of the earth. He meets there all the authors he has read and admired. He sees the goddess herself and is witness of the strange way in which she distributes her favours. Thence he passes to the House of Rumour in order to discover how news is manufactured. From every side he sees bearers of false and true messages arriving, and his ears are deafened by the din. At this point the poem breaks off suddenly.

Chaucer did not care to finish it, a sure proof that the fiction was not entirely to his taste. He found, as he wrote, that he was incapable of sustaining his part, of persevering in artifice as a good allegory requires. The real made too frequent an appeal to him. He could not maintain his own illusion uninterruptedly. The best passages of the poems are those in which his sense of humour bursts, with a quip, the bubble he has blown in the air. When the *Hous of Famė* arrests our attention to-day, it is that Chaucer is speaking familiarly of himself, of his life "as an hermyte," absorbed in reading, who goes home from his work to abstract himself from the world and lose himself in his beloved books, "tyl fully dasewyd ys [his] looke."

The passage in which the golden eagle bears him through the air is very characteristic. It is possible that this bird was born of that by which Dante was rapt to the fiery sphere, and that Chaucer had read the *Divina Commedia* immediately before he wrote his poem. He wishes to make it clear that he is not of the race of Dante. The way in which the London burgher follows the great Florentine on his voyage through space is curious. The justice of his self-characterisation is delicious: he is, he says, not apt for sublime flights, but he consoles himself with the light scepticism which is of his nature, stating his preference for walking with his feet on the solid earth. He is much afraid that Jupiter intends to "stellifye" him. For a moment he admires his near view of the Signs of the Zodiac and of the Galaxy or Milky Way, but soon he declares that he is too old to learn the secret of

these marvels, and fears to burn his eyes by looking at the stars from so near. Flying is not for him: give him feet, not wings. From the height of the empyrean he is thinking regretfully of the good muddy tracks which plough the road from London to Canterbury.

In this imperfect and characteristic poem, Chaucer, with his intelligent, bantering spirit, strolls through the "highest heaven of invention." He refuses, once for all, to give himself wholly to the sublime or to believe profoundly in purely spiritual conceptions.

For analogous reasons, Chaucer did not finish his *Legende of Goode Women* which he wrote about 1385. This, indeed, has nothing of the allegorical except the prologue, and the prologue is charming. It is Chaucer, the conventional poet, at his most graceful and most personal. He has an unstudied expansiveness, tells us again how much he loves the books which hold all the stories, which he leaves only in the month of May to go to the meadows and pay duty to Nature personified in the daisy. It is when he *has spent a whole fine day admiring the little flower he so loves*, that he dreams at night in his arbour where he "bad men sholdé me my couchë make" He sees

> The God of Love, and in his hande a quene
> And she was clad in real habit grene.

Her head is crowned with a garland of daisies,

> For al the world ryght as a dayesye
> Ycorouned ys with white leves lyte,
> So were the flourons of hire coroune white.

Behind the royal couple walk nineteen most noble ladies,

> And trewe of love thise wemen were echoon.

The god finally perceives the poet on his knees before a daisy, and chides him for daring, all unworthy, to approach love's flower. Is he not love's heretic, since he has translated the *Romaunt of the Rose?* Has he not, by depicting Criseyde's unfaithfulness, thrown suspicion on all women? The good queen intercedes for the poet, who has also, she says, written books of pure love and devotion. She asks leave to choose his penance, and decrees that he shall compose a glorious legend of virtuous women, virgins and wives, who were loyal in their lives, and tell

also of the knaves who betrayed them. It appears during the course of the prologue that the good queen is Alcestis, that incomparable wife who sacrificed herself in order to give back life to Admetus. We are thus led to see a glorified Anne of Bohemia in this Alcestis, and her young husband, Richard II., in the handsome and irritable god of love. As for the nineteen fair ladies in the train of Alcestis, they are those whose virtue the poet is commanded to celebrate.

Chaucer begins by throwing himself into his task. He always excels at depicting the self-denial and suffering of women in love, and he makes use of ancient sources, especially Ovid's *Heroides,* to write several most pure and touching legends, those of Thisbe, Lucretia, Philomela and Ariadne, among others. But the same mocking good sense, which prevented him from finishing the *Hous of Fame*, came to whisper irreverently in his ear as he was writing out his legends, to grumble that he should have to enhance the beauty of these deserted women and vilify their seducers. It seemed to him that this was not reality, and even his books revealed to him certain faults in some of the heroines who were the set objects of his praises—Cleopatra, for instance, and Medea. The outcome was that this poem also was not finished. The task imposed by the queen became an intolerable penance, and there is not a doubt that Chaucer was right to leave it for the *Canterbury Tales*. Yet the legends, incomplete as they are, contain exquisite passages, and moreover they did Chaucer the service of taking him away from allegory—only the prologue of this poem is allegorical—and inducing him to tell, after the ancient masters, some imperishable tales of love and grief. Now translating and now adapting, Chaucer was able to give a personal turn to these famous themes. He has not Ovid's brilliant rhetoric, but there is an advantage in the artlessness of his style. He is both less witty and more feeling than his model. This poem is the last he wrote before the *Tales* and it leads to them directly. It is, further, in this poem that Chaucer first used the ten-syllabled rhyming couplet to which he returned in his masterpiece.

4. *Chaucer under Italian Influence. The Knightes Tale. "Troylus and Criseyde."*—Taken as a whole, all the poems which have been mentioned are in the French succession. But the three last, written after Chaucer's first journey to Italy in 1372, show numerous traces of the influence of Italian poetry. He was

immediately sensitive to the genius of the great Italians whose works he knew at least in part—Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. From them, better than from the too distant poets of antiquity, he learnt to enrich his line which was still a little slight, to find more glowing images and more impassioned themes. The influence which these three poets had on him was however very unequal. He was, without doubt, fully conscious of the greatness of Dante, whom he calls the "gret poet of Itaile," but he was no less aware of the difference between his own genius and that of the sublime visionary. As we have seen, he banteringly refuses to follow Dante to the regions of the air, and he borrows from him only very sparingly. It is when, in the Monk's Tale, he tells the story of Ugolino, that he comes nearest to emulating him, and then he transforms the terror of the scene so that it becomes touching. Fear does not render Chaucer's Ugolino speechless or leave him dry-eyed when he knows himself condemned to die by starvation, but the poet compensates by the moving, homely complaints he puts into the mouth of the youngest child who weeps for a little bread. Chaucer was not made, like Dante, to plunge into Hell or rise to Paradise.

He probably knew Petrarch personally, saw him at Padua and heard him read his story of Griselda in Latin. He retained high respect for this poet:

> Fraunces Petrark, the laureat poete,
> Highte this clerk, whose rethorique swete
> Enlumynd al Ytail of poetrie.

But Chaucer could not follow in the footsteps of the great humanist, so near to the ancients, so cognisant of philology, so much ahead of his contemporaries on the road of the Renascence. As for Petrarch the sonneteer, his excessive subtlety and his idealism refined to a quintessence, could not appeal to a nature as normal as Chaucer's, whose tenderness was never far removed from joviality.

It is significant that Chaucer's only important borrowing from Petrarch is the story of Griselda, a Latin translation of the last of Boccaccio's tales. Boccaccio was assuredly the Italian to have most influence on Chaucer, who, none the less, never mentions his name. Boccaccio provided him with some of his most remarkable stories, and also, almost invariably, with a model for the

most splendidly decorated and warmly passionate of his verses. It was, however, only Boccaccio the poet and the compiler of *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* and *De Claris Mulieribus* whom Chaucer knew. He does not seem ever to have read the *Decameron*, for all that he was to figure to posterity principally as the storyteller who rivalled Boccaccio.

Chaucer's debt to the poems of Boccaccio's youth is especially considerable. He condensed and abridged the *Teseide* to make his Knighte's Tale, retelling the story of the rivalry of Palamon and Arcite, two youths who were as brothers, their affection heightened by a shared captivity, until the day when love for the same maiden brought them to face each other as enemies, armed for a fight. Chaucer, adapting freely, was able to extract from the exuberant *Teseide* the romance of sentiment which is buried in those pseudo-epical ten thousand lines. He kept the best of Boccaccio's descriptions, yet introduced homely scenes of his own, and made Theseus into a humorous personage after his own mind.

The most memorable result of his contact with Boccaccio's poetry was, however, *Troylus and Criseyde*,[1] a poem half translated and half adapted from *Il Filostrato*. In this Boccaccio uses a frame borrowed from the *Roman de Troie* of Benoît de Sainte-More to express all his feelings as a lover "laid low by love" (*filostrato*). In the person of the knight Troilo, he is loved and then betrayed by Cressida, and his love is served by his mistress's young cousin, the sceptical yet disinterested Pandaro, who abounds with worldly wisdom and considers that to aid a passion is a fine and virtuous action.

This burning, harmonious and swiftly moving poem was retold by Chaucer, who took as many liberties with it as he had done with the story of Palamon and Arcite, but this time enlarged and lengthened his original instead of condensing it. The changes involved are due to a different conception of characters and sentiments. Boccaccio's first object had been to depict passion and voluptuousness, but Chaucer was drawn especially to the study of character. In his poem, the ardent, breathless tale of love is accompanied by a comedy of which Pandarus is the central character, and a very different Pandarus from Boccaccio's Pandaro. Pandarus is not the cousin but the uncle of Criseyde, a man in middle life, familiar in his ways, fond of chaff and inclined to

[1] Edit. R. K. Root (Princeton University Press, 1926).

gossip, such a great quoter of proverbs and maxims that he sometimes reminds us of Polonius and sometimes of Sancho Panza, playing, the while, the part of Macette. It is his interminable chatter which constitutes Chaucer's addition of two or three thousand lines to the Italian poem. In consequence, the action of Chaucer's poem is markedly slower than Boccaccio's, but its added element of comedy relaxes that strain of the pathetic which is felt in *Il Filostrato*. Instead of expressing the sentimental, like Boccaccio, Chaucer's aspiration is to reflect life. He lets a livelier air, as from an open window, into the heavy and perfumed atmosphere of the boudoir in which Boccaccio confines us. The most poetic passages of the poem are literal translations from the Italian, for instance the description of the despair of Troylus after the departure of his mistress (Book V. st. 29-99), but all the drollery has been invented by Chaucer. It is strange that Chaucer, faced with a Latin author, deals with him exactly as an English dramatist of the Renascence would have done. He does what Shakespeare was to do again and again. He accepts and preserves, almost intact, the tragic elements of his theme and the sentimental beauty of the youthful leading characters, but everywhere he rearranges, transforms or creates anew the character-studies. Even thus Shakespeare faithfully retells the love of Romeo and Juliet, but develops the characters of the nurse and old Capulet on original lines and creates Mercutio. Whatever force the tragic and sentimental scenes of the English dramatists may have, they are rarely the element in their plays which is most personal to them. It is with the comic that they are especially concerned. Chaucer, by instinct, made a precedent for the great national dramatist who wrote more than two hundred years after him.

Although his *Troylus and Criseyde* does not quite conceal his efforts to reconcile originality and imitation, although it has lost the just and certain proportions of its model, and makes exotic Neapolitan flowers bloom beneath unquiet Kentish skies, it is yet an admirable work, astonishing if its date be remembered, far superior in point of style and versification to anything in contemporary English literature. And from the fact that he felt himself hampered while he wrote it, Chaucer learnt a fruitful lesson. Instead of pursuing further these imitative exercises which left him only half his freedom, he sought a subject which

should be truly his own. In his *Troylus* he was half Italian and half English. In his masterpiece he was to be all English.

5. *The "Canterbury Tales."*—Up to this time Chaucer's work, although he sought inspiration in France and Italy, or rather because he was the too docile pupil of foreign masters, is interesting mainly to the English. He deserves admiration for having civilised his country poetically, but he had spent his strength almost entirely on translating and adapting. He was still no more than the "great translator" praised by Eustache Deschamps, the word being taken in its wide sense. His part was that of interpreter between the Continent and his country. Who could have hoped that, as he neared his fiftieth year, he would suddenly be revealed as himself a master, the painter of English society, and the creator of a work which in this fourteenth century would leave the contemporary poetry of France far behind it, and even, in some respects, that of Italy also?

The genius which was to flower had been his from the beginning. He did not suddenly become an observer. He had already seen and retained much, although hitherto he had not found among his models a mould in which to cast his observations. Without doubt, there was already that rich diversity in his nature which made him curious of the beautiful and the ugly alike, which was compounded of poetry and prose, piety and scepticism, grace and humour. When, however, he wished to house this complexity, he found only literary forms apt to isolate one or other of its aspects. He had been held by allegory or lyrical narrative when his genius was impelling him, irresistibly, towards dramatic and realistic storytelling, the weaving of a web in which the threads would be both comic and sentimental.

So far, he had brought only two considerable poems to completion, the one a mere translation of the *Roman de la Rose*, the other his adaptation of *Il Filostrato*, a poem whose original harmony he disturbed by his efforts to introduce into it matter of his own. He had begun two other important poems, but had been unable or unwilling to finish them. The *Hous of Fame* discouraged him by the factitiousness of its allegorical machinery and the use, or rather abuse, of personified abstractions which its plan entailed; he wearied of the *Legende of Goode Women* because it imposed on him a partisanship, obliged him, by its preliminary conditions, to be unfailingly sentimental and partial, and there-

fore necessarily monotonous. Did he wonder whether he would ever find a more pliable and wider frame, in which he could fit stories as varied as life and mobile as his changing moods, stories in which he could be lyrical and epical, by turns, which he could tell tenderly, swiftly, poetically, feelingly, humorously or merrily?

It was at this moment that he bethought him of the collections of stories of which several had been made in the Middle Ages, on the plan so awkwardly reproduced by his friend Gower in the *Confessio Amantis*. The *Decameron* would undoubtedly have stimulated him further had he not been, to the best of our knowledge, unaware of it. Yet even Boccaccio's example was not such as to fulfil his aim of variety. That society of elegant young gentlemen and ladies, hardly distinct from each other, telling tales while the plague raged in Florence, was not the band of storytellers he wanted. It was strongly individualised narrators, taken from the most diverse classes, whom he wished to interpose between himself and his readers. And at last he had the very simple and yet quite novel idea of a pilgrimage which would unite people of every condition. Since the spring of 1385 he had been living at Greenwich, on the road of pilgrims from every county in England who were constantly drawn to the shrine of Saint Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. Often and often he had watched the progress of their variegated cavalcades, men and women, knights and burghers, handicraftsmen and clerks, mingled in momentary fellowship. One fine day, moved by devoutness or mere curiosity, he may himself have joined one of these troops. No sooner had he got his idea than the work went of itself. He had but to describe his pilgrims, give each of them his individual characteristics as well as the marks of his rank, then put an appropriate tale into his mouth.

Thus the first requisite was to present a band of storytellers clearly. No enterprise could be more difficult at any time, difficult to-day and more difficult at a date when nothing of the sort had yet been attempted. The simplicity of Chaucer's method, its complete lack of any artifice, the sure hand with which he traced portraits to form the prologue of his *Tales*, are surprising. He made his group of pilgrims into a picture of the society of his time of which the like is not to be found elsewhere. Except for royalty and the nobles on the one hand, and the dregs of the

people on the other, two classes whom probability excluded from sharing a pilgrimage, he painted, in brief, almost the whole English nation.

There are thirty of the pilgrims, following the most diverse trades. The Knight with his son, the Squire, and the Yeoman who bore the Squire's arms, represent the fighting class. A Doctor of Physic, a Man of Law, a Clerk of Oxford and the poet himself give a glimpse of the liberal professions. The land is represented by a Ploughman, a Miller, a Reeve and a Franklin, trade by a Merchant and a Shipman, the crafts by a Wife of Bath, a Haberdasher, a Carpenter, a Webbe or Weaver, a Dyer and a Tapicer, the victuallers by a Maunciple, a Cook and the Host of the Tabard. The secular clergy provide the Good Parson and the odious Sompnour or summoner of an ecclesiastical court, who are joined on the road by a Canon addicted to alchemy. The monastic orders supply a full contingent—a rich Benedictine Monk, a Prioress with her chaplain Nun, a mendicant Friar; and not far from these religious, a doubtfully accredited Pardoner wends his way.

Chaucer, desiring distinct outlines, first used the easiest and clearest method of differentiation, which is to contrast various callings. This results—especially in those days did it result—in a whimsical medley of colours and costumes which at once catches the eye, and it allows a whole series of habits and tendencies to be suggested by half a word. Only the generic features, the average characteristics of each calling, have to be marked, in order to give a sufficiently definite picture which has its own identity. Thereafter all that is left to do is to make each person talk as befits his station and nature.

The idea looks so simple that all the noise it has made in the world might be thought exaggerated. It was, however, a novelty. It had no precedent outside obscure corners of a rudimentary drama, and it was to mark a turning-point in European thought. It was more than a literary innovation. It was a change of mental attitude. Poetry turned, with tolerant curiosity, to the study of man and manners. For the first time, the relation between individuals and ideas was clearly realised. Ideas ceased to be an end in themselves, and became interesting as revealing him who expressed them, who believed in them, or who was pleased by them. And they acquired therewith an

unforeseen value. The ideas which Chaucer had hitherto given to the world could not be called very original. They were less novel and perhaps less powerful than those, for instance, of Jean de Meung. It would be easier to extract some sort of philosophy from Jean de Meung's works than from Chaucer's. When, however, Chaucer's ideas emanate from a man of a given temperament, represent the prejudices of a class or the routine of a trade, they immediately take on youth or fun, become penetrating and sometimes profound, although they themselves are unchanged. It is that dramatic use is made of them. Their value in isolation or abstraction matters as little as ever, but they are richly significant because they fall from the lips of a definite person who reveals or betrays himself by their means.

For such an end it is necessary that the author efface himself voluntarily. Chaucer is fully conscious of the realism to which he obliges himself. He assumes the part of mere interpreter, a chronicler and no more, who relates without altering a word or a tone stories he has heard told. By his grouping of representatives of the different callings, and by his impartiality which allows individuals to speak and never dictates their thoughts or words, he has painted, with minute exactness, the body and soul of the society of his time. He is as truly the social chronicler of England in the late fourteenth century as Froissart is the political and military chronicler of the same period.

Chaucer has collected the descriptions of the pilgrims in his general prologue, which is a true picture-gallery. His twenty-nine travelling companions make almost as many portraits, hung from its walls. They face us, in equidistant frames, on the same plane, all hanging on the line. Chaucer is a primitive, aiming at exactness of feature and correctness of emblem. He is a primitive also by a certain honest awkwardness, the unskilled stiffness of some of his outlines, and such an insistence on minute points as at first provokes a smile. He seems to amass details haphazard, alternates the particulars of a costume with the points of a character, drops the one for the other, picks either up again. Sometimes he interrupts the painting of a pilgrim's character to put colour on his face or his tunic. It is an endearing carelessness, which hides his art and heightens the impression he makes of veracity:

Ses nonchalances sont ses plus grands artifices.

Who enters this gallery is first struck by some patches of brilliant colour, dominating one or other of the portraits, the Squire's gown,

> Embrowded was he, as it were a mede,
> Al ful of fresshë floures, white and reede,

and near him the Yeoman who serves him "in coote and hood of grene." How the Prioress's rosary "of smal coral," its decades, "gauded al with grene," and its hanging brooch "of gold ful schene," stands out against her dress! There are faces as strongly coloured as any of the fabrics or accessories—the pustulous countenance of the Sompnour, "a fyr-reed cherubynes face,"

> With skalled browes blak, and piled berd,

and the Miller, whose beard "as any sowe or fox was reed," with his wart whence sprouts a tuft of red hairs, his wide and black nostrils and his mouth "as wyde as was a gret forneys." There are also duller colours to rest the sight, and to make the cruder hues more brilliant by contrast. The pious and modest Knight was "nought gay,"

> Of fustyan he werede a gepoun,
> Al bysmotered with his habergeoun.

The poor Clerk was "ful threadbare," the Man of Law "rood but hoomly in a medled coote," the Reeve wore a "long surcote of pers," or blue, and the good Parson is drawn without line or colour, so that we are free to imagine him lit only by the light of the Gospel shining from his eyes.

Essential moral characteristics are thrown into relief with the same apparent simplicity and the same real command of means as the colours and the significant articles of clothing. Mere statements of fact, suggestive anecdotes, particulars relating to calling and individual traits, lines summing up a character—all these make up a whole which stands out upon its canvas. The outline is strong and clear although sometimes a little stiff, in the steady light which is shed on it, and it is unforgettable.

Chaucer was not content to make his pilgrims typical only of their several callings. Sometimes a classification of another kind crosses with that by trades and enriches it. Thus the Squire stands for youth and the Ploughman for the perfect charity of the humble, while in the Wife of Bath there is the essence of

satire against women. Nor is this all. Chaucer, by details he has observed for himself, puts life into conventional descriptions and generalisations made by others. He adds individual to generic features; even when he paints a type he gives the impression that he is painting some one person whom he happens to have met. He mixes these two elements in varying proportions and with great although imperceptible skill. His figures, a little more generalised, would be frozen into symbolism, mere cold abstractions, while a few more purely individual features would cause confusion, destroying landmarks and leading attention astray.

Thus English society, which to the visionary Langland seemed a swarming and confused mass, a mob of men stumbling against each other in the semi-darkness of a nightmare, was distributed by Chaucer among a group which is clearly seen, restricted in size and representative. Its members pause before us long enough for us to identify each one. Each has his own life and an identity which is for all time, yet together they sum up a society.

Chaucer does not only draw frank or delicately traced portraits which give to his characters the immobility of permanence. He also makes each pilgrim step out of the frame in which he first placed him. The artist does not pass straight from portrait to tale. He does not let us forget, on the road to Canterbury, that each storyteller is a living being who has his own gestures and tones. As the cavalcade pursues its course, the pilgrims talk among themselves. The poet shows them calling to each other, approving each other, above all squabbling. They criticise each other's stories, and so betray their preoccupations, feelings and interests. In this way a comedy of action goes through the whole poem, connects its different parts, a comedy which is no more than sketched, yet is adequate, in its incompleteness, to reveal the author's intentions and his dramatic vigour. The persons he has painted are again discovered by their own acts and words. As always happens when an analytical portrait gives place to a direct presentment, some of the pilgrims are found to be more complex, their limitations less discernible, their characteristics more numerous and their outline less definite than had appeared. This is certainly true of the famous Wife of Bath, indubitably the most vigorous of Chaucer's creations, who lives less by her

tale than by the immense monologue in which she gives outlet to her feelings as she rides along the road. As she speaks, she seems to be magnified before our eyes, to overflow the exact boundaries which the portraitist set to her personality, and to acquire pantagruelian dimensions. Not until Panurge and Falstaff arrived was there her like in literature. The same is true of the Host of the Tabard, the pilgrims' jovial guide, who is barely sketched in the prologue, but who, little by little and by successive touches, by his various remarks as they journey, is made to tell us much of his temper, his tastes, his dislikes and his private life. He is all the more real and living for never being analysed.

The tales gave Chaucer one means of finishing the portraits of his pilgrims. He found them in every corner of mediæval literature, as diverse and unequal as he could wish. The poet used their lack of originality to impart an added probability to his poem, for his pilgrims are supposed not to invent but to retell stories. Above all, he used the tales to characterise the tellers. He chose for each of them a story suited to his class and character, or, at least, he did this admirably where he had time. His first plan was immense, each of the thirty pilgrims undertaking to tell two tales on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back, so that there would have been one hundred and twenty tales altogether. In fact, Chaucer was not able to allot even one story to each of his travellers, nor, still more regrettably, had he time in every case to adjust story to teller. He was still hesitating about the assignment of certain tales when death surprised him. Enough was, however, accomplished to allow us to appreciate his design and his executive talent.

In a certain number of cases, the tale is so subordinate to the vast comedy in which it has place that its original form has a little suffered. More often, it is its meaning which is changed. It is possible to consider a story by itself to judge whether the writer has succeeded in his aim of producing the strongest possible impression by his distribution of the parts, his manipulation and unravelling of the plot, and his arrangement of details in view of the surprise of the conclusion. The excellence of a tale then depends simply on the skill with which its thread is followed, and on the grace or liveliness of its writing. But the same story may be told to reveal an alleged narrator. It then behoves the author

to conceal himself, to sacrifice his own literary talent and sense of proportion and give place to another, who may be ignorant, garrulous, clumsy, foolish or coarse, or moved by enthusiasms and prejudices unshared by his creator. Chaucer follows this principle to most of its consequences in that part of his work to which he was able to put the finishing touches. He very carefully allows more than one of his pilgrims to reveal themselves by introducing into their stories irrelevances, digressions which break the even course of a tale but which give an opening for the information, the discursiveness or the fads of the speaker. We notice this as we read the tales of the Wife of Bath, the Pardoner and the Yeoman of the alchemist Canon.

Elsewhere, the very fact that a story is assigned to a particular person is enough without any digressions, as when the tale of Griselda, fount of abnegation, is told by the good idealist Clerk, or when the graceful and mincing Prioress tells the story of the little cleric, devotee of Mary, who was slain by the Jews, or the Nun relates the tale of the miracle of Saint Cecilia, with its conventual atmosphere.

Chaucer goes so far as to give us stories which he invites us to think repellent or ridiculous. The Monk recites a litany of lugubrious and monotonous "tragedies," which sadden the Knight's good heart and make the Innkeeper yawn. He is not allowed to tell his funereal beads to the end, and when interrupted relapses into silence. The poet is prevented from finishing the tale of Sir Thopas which he allots to himself. The Host of the Tabard chides him for singing a chivalrous ballad, with rhyme but without reason. In such instances as these, the reader is expected to find his pleasure not in the excellence, but in the very extravagance or tediousness of the stories.

Such tales are deliberately exceptional. In general, the poet's gift of life is revealed within the stories as in the frame of the poem. Chaucer's own contribution is of varying importance. In the serious, strictly poetic part of the *Canterbury Tales,* his original work is very slight: he makes only insignificant additions, restrained in detail, to his borrowed material, and his merit is mainly in his style, which is often admirable for simple pathos and gentle humanity. The comic and realistic stories, which have analogies with the French fabliaux, are in very different case. These he has so much enriched that he might be called their

creator. He deserves this title, at least in part, even when he is compared to the author of the *Decameron,* who put so much heat and red blood into a literary form usually of the driest. While, however, Boccaccio observed the conciseness proper to this form and did no more than paint manners, Chaucer, less condensed and less passionate, addressed himself more and more to the study of character. He repeats within several of his stories that effort to capture individuality which is the glory of his prologue. Boccaccio is on the road to picaresque fiction, but Chaucer is pointing the way for Molière and Fielding. As we read the *Tales,* especially those of them which are humorous, we have constantly the impression that a birth is in progress. A leaven of observation and truth is fermenting within these established literary forms, which once had a perfection of their own, but which are narrow and about to be discarded. In this travail, modern drama and the modern novel are showing their first signs of life.

6. *Conclusion.*—If all this poet's work be regarded together, he is clearly seen constantly to have advanced nearer truth. He found poetry remote from nature, its essence being fiction in the accepted belief, while its task was the ingenious transposition of reality in accordance with artificial rules. In the beginning Chaucer submitted to the received code, dreamt with his contemporaries, like them had visions of allegorical figures and combined imaginary incidents. Or he sought the matter of his poems in books, borrowing his subjects and characters. Then, by degrees, he reached the point of deeming nothing as interesting and as diverse as Nature herself. Relegating his books to a secondary plane, ridding himself entirely of the allegory and the dream, he looked face to face at the spectacle of men and set himself to reproduce it directly. He made himself the painter of life.

It is well known how dry, morose and bitter such reproduction of reality can be. It may breed disgust with life and men. Chaucer, without flattering his model, placed it in an atmosphere which is good to breathe. No one can read him and not be glad to be in the world. Whoever enters through the door he opens feels a healthy air blow on him from all sides. This is partly because Chaucer writes in a dialect still new, uses words which he was the first to put to real literary use. The language breathes a freshness, as when earth is turned in April, such vernal youth

as it could never have at another time. Usually this novelty of language coincides with crudity of thought and puerility of art. But Chaucer, who begins English poetry, ends the Middle Ages. It happened that he inherited all the literature of France, rich by three centuries of generous effort, free of speech and fertile of thought, already a little weary because it had produced too much. For Chaucer, a literature in its autumn and a language in its spring combined as they have rarely, if ever, done before or since. He is at once very young and very mature; he unites the charm of a beginning to the experience of a long life. When he repeats a description or an idea which has become a little jaded in its native language, he often gives back to it the grace of novelty by the artlessness of his expression. In his highly skilled verses, English words, frozen by a long winter of waiting, first gave forth their fragrance.

To this advantage, due to exceptional circumstances, Chaucer added natural gifts, the first of them the wide sympathy which is otherwise called indulgence. To this especially his poetry owes the soft, lovable and smiling light which is shed on it. For some of his fellow-men he feels affection or respect; about all the others he has so much curiosity that they interest him. No one is excluded. He is not easily repelled. He loves the world's variety, is grateful to defects for their difference from virtues. He looks at himself without illusions, judges himself without bitterness, is carried away by no desire to excel. He places himself on the average level, and finds all the multitude of men beside him. It is the consciousness of shared failings which makes fellowship among men. Of all writers of genius, Chaucer is the one with whom it is easiest to have a sense of comradeship.

Sympathy of this kind, founded on clear self-knowledge, is a form of intelligence. If it were absolutely necessary to define in a word the novelty of Chaucer's masterpiece, it might be said to show, most of all, the progress of intelligence. It evinces a weakening of the passion which leads to lyricism or satire and is supported by self-confidence and by the energy of desires, hopes, loves and hates; a weakening also of the imagination which transforms and magnifies reality, projecting it on to another more or less arbitrarily chosen plane, and which produces epical, romantic or allegorical poems. In the *Canterbury Tales* the element of the poet's personality has been subdued, superseded by pleasure

in observing and understanding. Hitherto this degree of peaceful, impartial spectatorship had never been reached by poets. More noble and more essentially poetic works had indeed been written: we have but to name two with different claims to greatness, the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Divina Commedia*. Some of the line of French song-makers, stretching from the twelfth-century romancers to Rutebeuf, and past him to reach its apotheosis, a hundred years after Chaucer, in Villon, were more exquisite than the English poet and sounded more thrilling notes than he, nor did he ever attain to the refinements of feeling and language which Petrarch put into his sonnets. But where, before the *Canterbury Tales,* can we find a poem of which the first object is to show men, neither exalted nor demeaned, to display the truthful spectacle of life at its average? Chaucer sees what is and paints it as he sees it. He effaces himself in order to look at it better.

He is the pioneer of that group of spectators who regard with amused indulgence, without seeking to redip it in dye of one colour, the web and woof of variously coloured threads which is the chequered stuff of a society. Doubtless he has judged certain colours to be more beautiful than the others, but it is on the contrasts they afford that he has founded both his philosophy of life and the laws of his art.

CHAPTER III

THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY—FROM THE DEATH OF CHAUCER TO THE RENASCENCE (1400-1516)

1. *Chaucer's Imitators and Disciples in England.*—England took two centuries to produce a poet worthy to rank with Chaucer. Nothing better proves his genius than the powerlessness of the succeeding generations to equal or even to understand him, a fact the more striking because all the poets knew him and rendered him homage. When, however, they believe themselves to be imitating him they do no more than follow his inferior work, in which he does not surpass the average level of his time. They leave on one side the poems in which he rose above his contemporaries. Most of them barely reach the plane of Gower. Criticism in the fifteenth and even in the sixteenth century was so incompetent that it constantly placed Chaucer and Gower together, and Lydgate, that retrograde and prolix disciple of Chaucer, beside the two of them.

The years from 1400 to the Renascence were a period disinherited of literature. Several causes of this destitution may be discovered, but none which is satisfying save the fact that no writer of genius was born during these long years. The only excuse for the poverty applies to poetry alone. It is that, in the transition to the analytical modern English which was in course, the last inflections were disappearing. The result was that Chaucer's accurate and sure versification ceased to be understood soon after his death. When the final *e* had become entirely mute, Chaucer's line, badly read and transcribed, and later badly printed, seemed to be variable and irregular, to contain a differing number of syllables and irregularly distributed accents. His successors, whose ear was imperfect, were not offended by this lack of rhythm, but felt that it authorised them to licence in their own verse-making. The English verse-form was thrown off its balance, and definitely recovered a sure rhythm only with Spenser.

This cause of decline was one which an harmonious poet

would have charmed away, as indeed the poets of Scotland did exorcise it. Other causes of decadence, drawn from history, might be revealed by diligent search. The fatal effects on art of the Wars of the Roses (1454-83) might, for instance, be exaggerated, although this terrible civil conflict covered only a fourth of the vast desert space of time. Before this war, England under Henry V. experienced a time of military glory which recalled and exceeded the victories of Edward III., and the finest works of the fourteenth century had appeared during the deplorable and humiliating reign of Richard II. But it came to pass that neither triumphs nor disasters could inspire literature. Miserly Nature created only imitators and reiterators of outworn themes. The sense of the beautiful seems to have died with the sense of life and of reality. Contact with the Continent, once so fruitful, could not revive the flagging literary impulse. Contact hardly existed except with France, herself disabled. Italy, which Chaucer had revealed, remained forgotten for a whole century.

England suffered not only checked progress, but also retrogression. Literature resumed its course as though the *Canterbury Tales* had never been written. The decline was immediate. Its signs appeared even in those who knew Chaucer, were near him and called him master, in Occleve and Lydgate.

Both were aware of his superiority. It is touching to see how Occleve represents himself as the stupid scholar of an excellent master:

> My derë maister,—God his soulë quyte,—
> And fader, Chaucer, fayne wold have me taught,
> But I was dulle, and lerned lyte or naught.

Occleve, dull indeed, saw in Chaucer only an all-wise philosopher, a pious poet, almost a saint. Chaucer's humour escaped him. Lydgate is more discriminating, for while he agrees with Occleve that no poet was left "that worthy was his ynkehorne for to holde," he was conscious of Chaucer's wit, and shows his indulgence, not unmixed with scepticism, for verses submitted to him by his youthful disciples. But neither Lydgate nor Occleve was capable of continuing Chaucer's work.

Thomas Occleve[1] (1370?-1454?) is the author of a *Letter*

[1] Works ed. by Furnivall (Early English Text Society, i. and ii.).

of Cupid long ascribed to Chaucer. It is a translation of the *Epistre du Dieu d'amours* of Christine de Pisan, which was a reply to Jean de Meung's sarcasms against women. It recalls the *Legende of Goode Women* in theme, but it substitutes reasonings for imagination, humour and life.

In his *La Male Règle de T. Occleve*, which is a sort of confession, the poet informs us that he led a debauched youth, and that none was better known than he to the keepers of taverns and cook-shops in Westminster. The story of his irregularities entails some descriptions of London which are historically interesting although they have no value as poetry.

His principal work is the *De Regimine Principum*, written in 1411-12 to win the favour of the Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry V. It is a series of lessons on conduct, imitated from the Latin work of the same name which the Roman Ægidius wrote for Philip the Fair. Dissertations, historical samples and tales are used to inculcate the lessons. The whole is clear, fluent and sufficiently correctly versified, but the intellectual and artistic weakness is reminiscent rather of the didactic Gower than of Chaucer.

John Lydgate[1] (1373?-1450?) has the distinction of being the most voluminous poet of the fourteenth century and even of all the Middle Ages in England. About 140,000 lines of verse, authentically his, are extant. This Benedictine monk of Bury St. Edmunds was principally an indefatigable translator and compiler. His longest poems are the *Storie of Thebes* and *Troye-Book*, which retell the famous romances, the *Falls of Princes*, adapted from the Latin of Boccaccio, the *Temple of Glas*, a heavy allegory of love, the *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, translated from Guillaume de Deguileville, and some lives of saints, those of Saint Edmund, Saint Margaret, Our Lady and others

Lydgate's retrograde tendency is striking. He reverts in his *Troye-Book* to the original story, whence Boccaccio and Chaucer, in *Il Filostrato* and *Troylus and Criseyde*, had extracted the dramatic essence. He has forgotten that Chaucer took the best of his *Falls of Princes* for his Monk's Tale, and ironically ignored the rest, that Chaucer caused a Nun to relate the life of a saint

[1] There is no complete edition of Lydgate's works, but there are several good editions of his principal poems. *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, ed. Furnivall and Miss Locock (Early English Text Society, 1889, 1901, 1904) *Temple of Glass*, ed. J. Schick (ibid, 1891); *Troy-Book*, ed. H. Bergsen (ibid, 1906, et seq.).

with all its marvels, and thus disclaimed responsibility for it, and that he wearied of the allegory of his *Hous of Fame*, much as it exceeded the *Temple of Glas* in animation and picturesqueness. But no example could stay Lydgate's flow of words.

With Lydgate decomposition overtook English verse. He admits that he "toke none hede nouther of shorte nor longe," that is of accentuated and unaccentuated syllables, a candid confession which excludes the possibility of blaming copyists for the irregularities of his verse.

Much read and much admired by his contemporaries, who were grateful to him for telling so many stories, and telling them with a certain briskness, Lydgate has been a long time undisturbed except by courageous specialists. The small number of his verses which are still read are those extracted, as in an anthology, by Warton from his *Lyf of Our Lady*, or a few short pieces, religious and secular, a few fables, and, especially, *London Lickpenny*, which hymns with some liveliness the griefs of a countryman suing for justice in London. Unfortunately, Lydgate's authorship of this, the most popular of the poems ascribed to him, is uncertain.

Here and there, especially in the most Chaucerian of his poems, the *Complaint of the Black Knight*, there are pleasant descriptions, but in spite of them we ask whether this Benedictine ever had time to lift his eyes from his books and papers and look at nature. It is certainly from books that he seems to have taken most of his verses which speak of nature.

Much more attractive than the works of Occleve and Lydgate are certain short poems of which the authors are unknown or uncertainly known, and which were long attributed to Chaucer, so that they are included in many editions of his works.[1] A study of their versification and language has, however, proved that they belong to the fifteenth, a few of them even to the sixteenth, century.

A translation of Alain Chartier's *Belle Dame sans Merci*, made by Sir Richard Ros about 1450, is negligible. It dilutes the French octosyllabic lines into the heroic metre, filling them out with expletives and padding, and the result has no merit but correctness of rhythm. *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* (1403), now restored to Sir Thomas Clanvowe, who knew Chaucer, is,

[1] In the seventh volume of Skeat's edition of Chaucer (Oxford, 1897).

however, an agreeable poem, gracefully relating an argument between the two birds. Its rhythm is light and rapid, and its well-turned and pure language recalls both the *Parlement of Foules* and the prologue to the *Legende of Goode Women*. It is true that the charm of these three hundred lines is in the detail, for the conception—the debate between love and chastened experience—is not new. It goes back to the thirteenth-century debate between the Owl and the Nightingale.

The prologue of the *Legende of Goode Women* also inspired a charming allegory, *the Flower and the Leaf*, which was modernised by Dryden, who took it for Chaucer's. But Chaucer certainly did not write these disjointed verses, and they are now admitted to be the probable work of an unknown lady of the middle fifteenth century. The author reproduces the debate between the flower and the leaf to which Chaucer made only passing allusion.

The Leaf symbolises work and the serious and useful life, the Flower frivolous leisure. It is, however, possible to disregard the moral of this poem, and be charmed by the delicious opening descriptions of spring and nature, richer and less restrained than those of Chaucer. There are pretty effects of light and shade in the oak-wood to which the lady who cannot sleep resorts one spring day. There she sees appear, first the ladies and knights of the Leaf, dazzling in their pearls and ornaments or clad in gilded armour, and all crowned with laurel chaplets, who seat themselves beneath an oak. From another side there enter an equally sumptuous company of knights and ladies wearing flowery chaplets, who engage in a merry dance. It is all artificial, but the colour and brilliancy are delightful. A storm supervenes, and the followers of the Flower are drenched, their adornments spoilt. The queen gives them shelter and restores their beauty, and then all disappear.

This poem, like the one noticed before it, marks if not an advance on Chaucer's work, yet a difference from it. It is less substantial, real and humorous, but it has some added lightness, agility and airiness, and a new dewy quality. Although the fiction of a dream has been abandoned, the poem is more purely dreamy than its predecessors. This is, assuredly, the most exquisite product of the fifteenth century.

The *Court of Love* is a less freshly coloured poem, but one

which is more mischievously witty, shows greater power of characterisation and has a surer rhythm. It is the one of these poems which might best be claimed for Chaucer, had it not the "gilded" style which hints at "rhetoriqueurs." It is, in point of fact, the furthest removed from him in date, recent criticism having ascribed it to the first half of the sixteenth century. The author, who calls himself "Philogenet, of Cambridge Clerk," loses his way in the palace of Cytherea, where Admetus and Alcestis are vice-regents. Philabone, a lady of the court, informs him of the rules of the place, and shows him the persons who have obeyed or broken the laws of love. Among the latter are such as have deliberately refused to love and are now tormented by regrets. The poet enters the service of the fair Lady Rosial, who at first treats him harshly, but becomes gracious at the entreaty of Pity. The poem is concluded by a choir of birds, of whom each one intones a beautiful hymn of the Church.

Were this poem not too imitative, and did not "Philogenet" rather preserve acquired qualities than add to them or transform them, the fifteen hundred lines of his *Court of Love* would redeem the sterility of this impoverished time.

To imitate was then the rule. Langland's imitators matched Chaucer's. As early as the extreme end of the fourteenth century, an unknown author wrote the *Crede of Piers Plowman*,[1] a vigorous satire against friars of all orders. At an unknown date the Ploughman's Tale,[2] which Chaucer had not time to write, was annexed to the *Canterbury Tales*, serving as a vehicle for the grievances of some Lollard. There is a whole series of fairly mediocre poems, alliterative or other, which are evidence of the continued popularity, well into the sixteenth century, of the great fourteenth-century satire.

They occur both before and after the Wars of the Roses. When, after this long period of sanguinary civil conflict which suspended all literary activity, poetry reappeared in the reign of the first Tudor sovereign, Henry VII., its languor and weariness and its unrhythmic verse are strangely reminiscent of Occleve and Langland. Yet, when the nausea produced by the repetition of so many old characteristics and old faults has been overcome, it is possible to discern in it vague signs of the coming Renascence.

[1] Inserted in W. Skeat's edition of *Piers Plowman* (Oxford, 1906).
[2] In vol. vii. of W. Skeat's edition of Chaucer (Oxford, 1897).

The mediocre poet Stephen Hawes [1] (1475-1530) illustrates this point. He is yet another of the allegorists, but, while he is too much an echo of the past, he also feebly heralds Spenser. When the Wars of the Roses destroyed almost the whole of English chivalry, they relegated the old chivalrous poetry to a dreamlike past. The attempts to revive it which were made at court did no more than reconstruct an empty show, for the soul of this poetry had gone. It had become imaginative material, almost as unreal as allegorical scenes and personages. In compensation, however, chivalry had acquired the prestige which belongs to the remote, and the melancholy which attaches to regret, both elements of romanticism. It is only this vaguely romantic atmosphere which gives some interest to the languishing platitudes and uncadenced verses of Hawes. He complains that no one but himself in his generation cultivated true English poetry. So neglected was it that his king, Henry VII., reverted to an old precedent, and made a Frenchman, Bernard André of Toulouse, his poet laureate. Hawes, who acknowledged as his masters the trinity of Gower, Chaucer and Lydgate, and especially Lydgate, is like a ghost from the past. He writes allegories according to the formula of the *Roman de la Rose*, and, like Spenser, complicates it by the addition of chivalrous elements. Learned and didactic, he rejects all poetry which does not enclose a lesson.

He anticipates Spenser in that the subject of his principal works is the fashioning of man, by discipline, to an ideal of virtue. In his *Example of Vertue* (1503-4), he relates the allegory of a youth led by Discretion or Reason who finally marries fair Purity, the daughter of the King of Love. So long is the road he travels, so many his obstacles and so fearful the monsters he must slay, that he is sixty years old when he reaches his goal, and there is nothing better left for him to do than to ascend straight to Heaven with his beloved.

Hawes's chief work, the *Pastime of Pleasure*, or *Historie of Graunde Amoure and La Belle Pucel* (1505-6) has a like plan His aim in it is to exemplify a transcendent education, to show by what degrees of study and prowess perfection can be reached

Graunde Amoure, the hero of the poem who tells his own

[1] *The Pastime of Pleasure*, ed T. Wright (Percy Society, 1845); *The Example of Vertue* (original edition 1512, reprinted 1530).

story, relates that after falling asleep in a flowery valley he sees the Lady Fame appear to him. She tells that La Belle Pucel dwells in the magic tower of Music, but that giants bar the way thither. After serving a long apprenticeship to Ladies Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric, who constitute the Trivium, and Arithmetic, Music, Geometry and Astronomy, who are the Quadrivium, and after having slain the giants with his sword Clara Prudence, Graunde Amoure finally attains to La Belle Pucel, marries her, grows old and dies. Time writes his epitaph in the only lines of Hawes which still live in men's memory:

> For though the daye be never so long,
> At last the belle ringeth to evensong.

In general Hawes's style, sometimes aggrandised by Latinised words, sometimes entangled by awkward constructions, is among the worst known to English poetry. Never did poetry in English sink to lower depths of the prosaic than when Lady Grammar explained the nature of a noun to her pupil. The verses on the garden of Greek roots and on cooking recipes are much better than these.

Barclay and Skelton, the last two writers of verse who are in the mediæval tradition, at least show some novelty of subject or manner.

Alexander Barclay[1] (1474-1552), a Dominican, careful of doctrine, morals and orthodoxy, and a good Latinist, is hardly more than a translator, yet a free translator who adds matter of his own to his original. He is also the first of his nation to have come across a subject of German origin. His *Ship of Fools* is a translation made in 1509 from the Strasburg poet Sebastian Brant, not directly but through the medium of a Latin and a French translation. This fiction of a ship in which all fools are invited to embark, so that the author is able to review every kind of folly and insanity provided by mankind, had a great success in England, as on the Continent. Barclay did not miss his opportunity of adding some peculiarly English types to the crew.

He was also the first to introduce the eclogue to his fellow-

[1] *The Ship of Fools*, ed. T. H. Jamieson, 2 vols. (1874); *Certain Eclogues of A. B.* and *The Mirour of Good Manners* (Spenser Society, 1885); C. H. Herford, *Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century* (1886); *The English Versions of The Ship of Fools*, by A. Pompen (Longmans, 1925).

countrymen. In his youth he had written five eclogues, which he published in 1514, two of them imitations of Mantuanus, who was to be one of the classic Latin authors of the Renascence. They have nothing of the idyll, but are moral satires, discussions between a townsman and a countryman, between a poor poet and a rich miser, an exposition of the miseries of a courtier's life.

Barclay chose his models well, and he has the merits of sincerity of speech and a realism sometimes racy, but his style lacks ductility, his language is rude, and his verse suffers from the general lack of rhythm.

John Skelton (1460?-1529)[1] is a fantastic personage, hard to classify or define. As a learned humanist who won praise from Erasmus, an Oxford laureate famous for his Latin verses and known as a grammarian, he belongs to the Renascence. He is very well acquainted with ancient poets and mindful of the mythology of antiquity. His occupations were serious, for he was tutor to the future Henry VIII. and rector of Diss in Norfolk. But he writes verses like a buffoon, in many respects like a man behind his times. He is faithful to satirical allegory, and sets fine order and classic nobility and elegance at naught. He found heroic verse debased, and, instead of attempting to reform it, most often abandoned it in favour of a short irregular line and rhymes multiplied until a dozen of them sometimes follow each other. His verses might have been improvised by some untiring tavern poet. He deliberately turns his back on beauty, is fully aware of what he is about, and acknowledges that his only aim is to strike hard and straight:

> Though my rime be ragged,
> Tatter'd and jagged,
> Rudely raine-beaten,
> Rusty and moth-eaten;
> If ye take wel therewith,
> It hath in it some pith.

The pith is mostly satire. In this age of dull repetitions, Skelton pleases because he is brutal and coarse. No one has handled prelates more roughly, not even the Protestants among whom he is not numbered. Of his numerous poems, many of which are lost, the most interesting are the *Bowge of Court*, the *Boke of Colin Clout* and *Why Come ye not to Court?*

[1] *The Poetical Works of John Skelton*, ed. Dyce, 2 vols. (1843).

The patriotic impulse which had caused Barbour to write his *Bruce* in the previous century had almost ceased to be felt. The only poem which matches *Bruce* is *Wallace*,[1] written about 1461 by the minstrel called Blind Harry. He differed from Barbour, who related the comparatively recent exploits of the Bruce, for he went back to an earlier hero whose date was a hundred and fifty years before his own. The fabulous element looms much larger in *Wallace* than in *Bruce*. Wallace's exploits are magnified and multiplied. But the two poems tell their tale with the same naked simplicity. Barbour's prosaic quality is even intensified in Blind Harry, who is platitudinous. He is devoid of poetry, merely amasses detail, and his substitution of decasyllabic couplets for Barbour's eight-syllable verses only protracts the line awkwardly and increases its monotony.

This poem is isolated, and it heightens, by contrast, the ornate, even exaggeratedly brilliant, character of other Scottish verse in this century.

The first in date of the poets of Scotland who were influenced by Chaucer is King James I. (1394-1436). Doubts have been thrown on his literary claims, but they have not seriously shaken the beautiful and touching tradition that the *Kingis Quair*[2] expresses in verse a romantic incident of his life which he himself commemorated.

At eleven years of age he was taken captive by the English, together with the ship which was carrying him to France, and, in spite of the truce between Scotland and England, was kept a prisoner for nineteen years, but honourably treated and carefully educated.

During this captivity he fell in love with Lady Jane Beaufort, niece to Henry IV., whom he married in 1424.

His poem describes his love, and is a graceful medley of allegory and reality. Chaucer's work must have been much read by the young prisoner, for the *Kingis Quair* is full of Chaucerian reminiscences. Especially James remembers the charming passage of the Knightes Tale in which Palamon and Arcite see, from the window of their dungeon, the fair Emely walking in the garden, and at once fall in love with her. He had read and

[1] Ed. by J. Moir for the Scottish Text Society, 1884-9

[2] Ed by Skeat for the Scottish Text Society. Extracts in Morris and Skeat, *Specimens*, op. cit. See J. J. Jusserand, *Le Roman d'un roi*, in *Revue de Paris* (Feb 1884), and *Jacques Ier d'Ecosse fut-il poète?* (Paris, 1897)

re-read Chaucer's translation of the *Roman de la Rose* and the love-scenes in *Troylus and Criseyde,* particularly that in which the lovers first meet, and his head was filled with the poems in which a dream leads to a marvellous allegorical vision. His poem is inspired from all these known sources, but because he himself had partly lived through the traditional fictions, there is a freshness in his imitations which is quite personal, and more than once his stanzas surpass their models in emotion.

His complaint on his long captivity, his contemplation of the "gardyn faire" "fast by the touris wall" of his prison, the birds' song, "so loud and clere," which stirs him to love—all this is the most natural prelude to the appearance of the girl:

> For quhich sodayn abate,[1] anone astert
> The blude of all my body to my hert.

The sight of her is such that—

> My hert, my will, my nature and my mynd,
> Was changit clene ryght in another kind.

He recovers enough to gaze at the fair vision, to note her features and ornaments, and especially the heart-shaped ruby:

> That, as a spark of lowe,[2] so wantonely
> Semyt burnyng upon her quhytë throte.

There was in her—

> Beautee eneuch to mak a world to dote.

This prelude has so much charm and emotion that we willingly follow the poet through the dream which leads him from the palace of Venus to those of Minerva and of Fortune. Others have taken us thither before, but James can often point out a graceful or brilliant detail. And throughout the fantastic journey suspense reigns as to the outcome of a passion we know to be sincere:

> O besy goste![3] ay flikering to and fro,
> That never art in quiet nor in rest.

It is easy for us to share his joy when he wins to the "presence suete and delitable" of his mistress:

[1] Depression. [2] Flame. [3] Restless spirit.

And thankit be the fair castell wall,
  Quhare as I quhilom lukit forth and lent,
Thankit mot be the sanctis marcial,[1]
  That me first causit hath this accident.
  Thankit mot be the grenë bewis[2] bent,
Throu quom, and under, first fortunyt me
By hertis hele,[3] and my comfort to be.

This royal pupil, who commends his book to Gower and Chaucer, his "maistris dere," is a correct and harmonious versifier. His dialect is tempered by his assiduous reading of English models, and exempt from the difficulty increasingly felt in the poetry of his successors.

These, on the other hand, have more raciness, for they had not spent their youth in the English court. One of the most interesting of them is the Dunfermline schoolmaster, Robert Henryson (1425-1500)[4] who evinces a real independence even when he is imitating Chaucer.

He had read and admired *Troylus and Criseyde*, but his moral sense was shocked by the conclusion of the story. How could the faithful Troylus be killed and the fickle Criseyde be happy with Diomede thereafter?

Quha wait[5] gif all that Chaucer wrait was trew?

Henryson, one cold day in Lent, set himself to recast the conclusion of the story and write the *Testament of Cresseid*.

His Diomede soon deserts Cresseid, who becomes a light-of-love among the Greeks, and in punishment is afflicted by Heaven with leprosy. Then "with cop and clapper" she goes begging from door to door. One day Troylus, who is not dead, is returning from a glorious expedition and passes near the place where she sits. Not recognising her, yet reminded by her "of fair Cresseid, sumtyme his awin darling," he gives her a generous alms:

For knichtlie pietie and memoriale
Of fair Cresseid.

When he has gone, and she learns from the other leper folk who he is, she falls to the ground. Before dying she writes her

[1] Saints of March [2] Boughs. [3] Healing.
[4] *Complete works* edited by D. Laing (1865), and by Gregory Smith (Scottish Text Society, 1906 et seq.); *The Testament of Cresseid*, by Skeat, in vol. vii of his full edition of Chaucer's works (1897).
[5] Knows.

testament, bequeathing her body to the worms and toads, and all her goods to the lepers, save a ring, set with a ruby, which is to be carried to Troylus after her death. When he receives it and hears her story—

> For greit sorrow his hart to birst was bown.

He causes "ane tomb of merbell gray" to be raised above her grave.

Henryson seems to have been guided by his sense of reality at least as much as by a moral aim. He thinks this miserable end the most probable for the Cresseids of this world. Chaucer, in pity, had drawn a veil over the life of his heroine after her fall. Henryson is no less pitiful: his heart aches for Cresseid even while he is describing her horrible chastisement. His morality is penetrated with sympathy and humanity. His *Testament of Cresseid* has been accepted as the natural sequel to the romance. It is written in the same stanza as Chaucer's poem and is as correct and harmonious.

Henryson was no mere sentimental moralist. His moral fables show him in more homely guise, capable of mischievous energy. He tells us that he has had a vision of an old man,

> The fairest man that ever befoir I saw,

who declares that he is a Roman and named Æsop. This Roman Æsop without a hump—how remote we still are from the Renascence!—can tell a good story, with a mischievous smile, and the thirteen fables he dictates to Henryson—*The Cock and the Jasp*, *The Uplandis Mous and the Burges Mous*, *Schir Chantecleir and the Fox*, *The Lyoun and the Mous*, *The Wolf and the Lamb*, and the others—are among the best fables ever told. The matter is commonplace and everything is in the manner. They are not epical fables, such as Chaucer wrote, when jestingly and in heroic tones he sang the adventures of the cock and the fox, but they are copious, crowded with detail and with notes of customs or characteristics, abundantly picturesque, much more extensive than those of La Fontaine. What life and go there is in the most celebrated of them, which is imitated from Horace, *The Uplandis Mous and the Burges Mous!* How amusing the contrast between the rural mouse in her "sillie scheill" (poor hut),

> Withouten fyre or candill birnand bricht,

and her sister, the burgess mouse, whose dwelling is a larder in a rich man's house, and who says to the other:

My Gude Fryday is better nor your Pace![1]

All this is told with a swing and with fine humour, in the seven-lined Chaucerian stanza, and with sympathy for the animals brought on the scene. Happily the moral is placed by itself, so that nothing spoils or hinders the pleasure of the story.

Other qualities are revealed in Henryson's other short poems. *Orpheus and Eurydice*, founded on Boethius, has a pathetic lyricism, and *Robene and Makyne*, which is half-way between a *pastourelle* and a pastoral, is ingeniously constructed. Makyne has vainly sighed for Robene for "yeris two or thre," but he cares nothing for her, thinks only of his sheep, and repels her harshly. Hardly has she left him when he regrets her, and it is then his turn to beg and implore. But she reminds him of his hardness, laughs at his sighs, and bids him adieu:

Makyne went hame blythe anewche[2]
  Attour the holtis hair.[3]
Robene murnit, and Makyne lewche;[4]
  Scho sang, he sichit sair[5]
And so left him bayth wo and wrench,
  In dolour and in cair,
Kepand his hird under a huche[6]
  Among the holtis hair.

The *estrif* or *disputoison* is recalled, save for the fresh country air that blows through the poem. Of all the Scottish poets of this time, Henryson has most rustic realism and savours most of the soil.

The one of this remarkable group who is justly reputed the greatest is, however, William Dunbar (1460?-1520?).[7] This churchman, first in Franciscan habit, then unfrocked, at one time a wandering preacher, at others sent by James IV. on embassies to London and Paris, became in some sort the poet laureate of Scotland. Some hundred of his poems are extant. Nearly all of them are short, but their variety of subject and versification is surprising. Dunbar's prolificity has nothing in common with

[1] Easter.
[2] Enough. [3] Over the grey hills. [4] Laughed [5] Sighed sore [6] Cliff.
[7] Complete edition of his works in 3 vols. by Small, Mackay and Gregor (Scottish Text Society, 1884-93).

the flat long-windedness of a Lydgate. He is an artist, even, in some respects, a great artist. It is true that there is nothing new in his thought or feeling. He does not abandon the mediæval frames; both his allegories and his satires keep to the traditional grooves. Nor does he ever, like Villon whose verses he knew, thrill with a personal and vibratingly emotional note. He is without Chaucer's and Henryson's fine gifts of observation. But he has to a rare degree—one never reached before him and seldom since—virtuosity of style and versification. No one hitherto had put so much colour in pictures; no one, above all, had given such a swing to lines and stanza. It matters little that Dunbar has not much to say which touches the heart or the mind. He dazzles the eyes and ravishes the ears.

It is brilliancy which is especially remarkable in his official allegories, for instance *The Thrissil and the Rois*[1] in which he symbolises the marriage in 1503 of James IV. to Margaret Tudor, daughter of Henry VII., that union of Scotland and England. Dunbar has recourse to the convention of a vision during sleep, but what a wealth of coloured words he uses, how rapidly the allegories, usually so slow, unfold themselves in his hands! His flamboyant style can doubtless be criticised, yet artifice is in place in such occasional verse. Poetry of this kind, in which conventionalised and highly coloured heraldic figures are substituted for real beings—the lion, the eagle, the thistle, the rose—is surely suited to the celebration of a marriage between two countries. The very violences of the style are those of an artist whose effects are new, as when he speaks of birds singing—

Amang the tendir odouris reid and quhyt.

He goes farther in his *Goldyn Targe*, in which he uses unremittingly a nine-line stanza having two rhymes. Nothing in this allegory shows an advance on the *Roman de la Rose*. There is yet another dream and description of a day in May; the white sail appears of a ship from which seven ladies "in kirtillis grene" are landed. The poet is accused by Dame Beauty and defended by Reason, who shields him with a golden targe or shield, so that his enemies are powerless against him until Presence blinds Reason by casting a powder in his eyes. The poet is then held prisoner until he awakes.

[1] See Morris and Skeat, *Specimens*, op. cit.

Certainly Dunbar does not wish to be taken seriously, but he gives the reader the pleasure of dazzling decoration and of a freedom of movement which, for once, keeps at bay the tedium which threatens all allegories. Can this rainbow-hued country, in which all the colours of precious stones—rubies, beryls, emeralds, sapphires—radiate together, be grey Scotland? It would be easier to believe ourselves transported to the kingdom of a Hãroun al Raschid. The oriental imagination of this northerner is astonishing.

The natural must not be expected of this great decorator, nor mystical and fervent piety of this Franciscan. It occurred to him, one day, to bring the seven deadly sins on to his stage, but for no graver purpose than to set them spinning in a wild, macabre dance. We have enough edifying pictures of these sins to allow us to thank Dunbar for treating them as no more than the pretext for a mad whirligig. His *Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis*, written in lyrical twelve-lined stanzas, is perhaps the most characteristic of his poems. We do not seek in it either justice of detail or religious horror of vice. It has instead the marks of a strange coarseness, and is fuller of buffoonery than of edification. It ends with a rough jest against the Highlanders whom Dunbar held in derision. But the verbal swing and the giddy liveliness of these ten stanzas are marvellous.

Dunbar was a master of satire, especially of the jovial invective and repeated and unbridled insults which Scots call "flyting." Rabelais himself could hardly have held his own with him in this field, in which his vocabulary positively seems to be drunk, so dizzy is the play of rhymes and alliterations.

It should be added that Dunbar was ingenious in his choice of themes for his satires and framework for his mocking invective. Now he sees in a dream a demon in the guise of St. Francis who brings him the habit of his order, and to whom he explains why it does not please him to resume it (*How Dunbar was desired to be one freir*). Now he makes a pretended apology to the corporation of tailors who have complained of his ridicule, which he is thus enabled to repeat with more sting than ever (*The Tournament*). Or again, in order to mock a charlatan who has tried to fly on wings of his own making and has fallen and broken his leg, Dunbar pictures him attacked by all the fowls of the air when he takes his flight (*The Fenyeit Freir of Tungland*).

In every verse-form he excels. He uses Langland's alliterative line with as much success as the Chaucerian metre. He unites the metres of both masters when, with extraordinary cynicism, he relates the fable of *The Two Mariit Wemen and the Wedo,* whose scabrous conversation he overhears, as they sit in their garden after some hearty drinking. The remarks on the obligations of matrimony which, in alliterative verse, he puts in their mouths would have brought blushes to the cheek even of the Wife of Bath.

On occasion, however, he is capable of a higher lyricism. There is a note of melancholy in his *Lament for the Makaris,* in which he names the poets of his country and of England who have died. It recalls Villon's enumeration of the illustrious ones whom death has ravished. The Latin refrain, "Timor mortis conturbat me," sounds in these short stanzas the knell of the departed. But they have not Villon's sober exactness nor his intimate thrill. The effect produced is more external, and is due, above all, as it always is in Dunbar, to astonishingly skilful rhythm.

The fact that Dunbar's merits may, in the last analysis, be summed up as mastery of form, does not impugn his right to a place of honour. For with him there is no question of inert perfection, but of intense life such as belonged to none of the *rhétoriqueurs* whose contemporary he was. Far from bending beneath the load of his rich vocabulary, he carries it easily. He has dash, and this is to say that he is half-way to lyricism.

Very different from this frequently coarse Bohemian was the high-born Gavin Douglas (1475?-1522?),[1] a churchman who became a bishop, and whose personal history mingled with that of Scotland when, after the disaster of Flodden in 1513, he was drawn into politics. While he hardly corresponds to the usual idea of a prelate, he was yet a man of heart and of honour, and also a man of letters who first gained distinction in the field of traditional poetry, and ended by showing himself almost a precursor of the humanism of the Renascence.

In his youth he began with allegory. At twenty-six he wrote the *Palice of Honour* (1501) in which he imitates Chaucer's *Hous of Fame.* The difference between the subjects of the two poems is reflected in their titles. It is the House of Honour

[1] Complete edition of his works by John Small (Edinburgh, 1874).

which this poet enters in his dream, where dwell illustrious men who in their lives have followed the laws of truth and loyalty. Douglas modestly declares that he can find no place there for himself. In the course of the dream he mixes the sacred and the profane, moral allegory and mythology. The nymph Calliope explains the redemption of man to him, at his desire. There is a scholar as well as a moralist behind these puppets.

Later, Douglas wrote *King Hart*,[1] in which he shows much maturer psychological power. His great model is still the *Roman de la Rose*, but he also knows the *Séjour d'Honneur* of Octavien de Gelais whom he has already imitated in his earlier poems, and he has felt the influence of the morality plays which were then supreme in the theatre.

There is a constant mingling of humour and melancholy in this allegory. King Hart, or Heart, is made captive by Dame Pleasance, and delivered by Dame Pietie, then marries the charming enemy who has overcome him. But, after seven years, Age knocks at the gate of the palace of Pleasure, and all the young and flighty courtiers, who once had surrounded her, flee, and are at last followed by the dame herself. Reason and Wit then warn the king to return to his own castle, where he is ere long assailed by the hideous army of Decrepitude. Before he dies he makes an ironic testament.

The scene of the arrival of Age, most unwelcome of visitors, is full of life, and there is much graceful melancholy in the king's farewell to Youth:

> Sen thou man pas, fair Youth heid, wa is me!

In spite of their merits, these poems have too little novelty to have ensured Douglas's renown by themselves. He has another claim to fame in that, first in Great Britain, he translated Virgil into verse (1512-13). Before him, only Chaucer had rendered a few fragments of the Latin poet, and in such reedlike tones that he seemed to be writing a parody. Caxton, the first printer, had published a prose version made from a pretended French translation which was really a mediæval romance and of which Douglas says that, although Caxton had called it "Virgil in Eneados,"

[1] Extracts in Gregory Smith, *Specimens of Middle Scots*

It has na thing ado tharwith, God wait,
Ne na mair lyke than the devill and Sanct Austyne.

Douglas aimed at translating exactly, word for word, but need for comprehension and the imperfection of his language often led him to render one word or one line by several. He retains something of the Middle Ages and travesties characters, as when he makes a nun of the Sibyl or a gentle lord of Æneas.

He translates into heroic couplets in which he uses more licence than in his other poems. Altogether this is an interesting work, energetic and sometimes brilliant.

Its most curious part is the prologues which precede the books. These contain the most original and most Scottish verses of the poet. In them Douglas writes as his fancy bids him, of himself or of the season. In a description of winter which begins the seventh book, and one of spring which opens the twelfth, he may be said to have anticipated by two centuries his fellow-countryman Thomson, of *The Seasons*, for he is as faithful to nature and prodigal of detail. His exuberance is especially striking, his abundant colours, scents and sounds. He is like a Dunbar striving for realism. But in the long run his scene is felt to be crowded: mind wearies and eyes ache. His language is moreover the most difficult of the period because of the number of the learned and popular sources whence it derives. An Englishman is unable and a Scot hardly able to read Douglas without a glossary.

In his prologues he allows himself full rein, for he writes them only for his own pleasure. In that to Book XII.[1] he would merely have us know how the singing of the birds woke him at four in the morning and he resumed his translating. Sometimes his readers share the diversions of a humanist, as when he adds to Virgil a thirteenth book translated from the Italian Maffeo Vegio. Its prologue informs us that in a dream the writer is charged by Vegio to make this translation. He at first refuses, pleading unfitness, but Vegio insists that he who has translated the poem of a pagan is far more bound to do this service to a Christian, and finally the Italian poet prevails by the argument of twenty blows with a cudgel.

These particularities of his Virgil show, almost as much as

[1] Printed by Morris and Skeat in *Specimens*, op. cit.

his earlier allegories, that Douglas was not in the full stream of the Renascence. He stood on its brink, marking the transition from one age to another.

We have still to speak of his countryman Sir David Lyndsay, who poetically was even more attached than he to the past. Lyndsay's life was, however, a long battle which coincided with the Reformation, and he definitely belongs to the sixteenth century.

3. *The Old Ballads.*[1]—The works we have reviewed constitute, in Scotland as in England, the official poetry of the fifteenth century. This is far from being all the poetry of the period. There were also anonymous popular verses, both ruder and more truly alive, which often cannot be localised or dated with any precision. They cannot all be claimed for the fifteenth century, for poems of the sort must have had an earlier beginning and certainly were produced until a later time, but the impulse to make them seems to have been particularly active in this century, to which, moreover, the oldest extant specimens belong.

The word ballad, vague as it is, denotes them best. But they must be in no way identified with the courtly ballade, which was fixed in form and peculiarly learned and artificial. The two words doubtless share a derivation from *baller,* to dance, and the ballad and ballade both originated in the poetry which accompanied dancing and implied musical declamation with a collective refrain. But hardly more than the traces of this prototype remain. When the popular ballad of Great Britain emerges from the shadows it retains no more of its primary form than warrants a presumption, more complete than for other kinds of poetry, of co-operation between the poet and his audience. It has even been supposed that a ballad is the spontaneous and joint composition of a group of people. Reflection shows, however, that this theory has little plausibility. There could be agreement for the purposes of poetry among a number of people only in the sharing of a passion, and the work of an artist or several successive artists has to be recognised in a ballad of any length. It was artists, however primitive, who interpreted the multitude. Once a ballad

[1] F. J. Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 10 vols (1882-98), critical edition; edition in 1 vol, with introduction by G. L. Kittredge (Boston, 1904); F. G. Gummere, *Introduction to Old English Ballads* (Boston, 1894); D. Laing, *Early Popular Poetry of Scotland and the Border*, ed. Hazlitt, 2 vols. (1895).

existed, the public did in some sort collaborate in its making, for memory altered, modified or suppressed, and new circumstances suggested opportune additions. Oral tradition changed the form of the poem. Like money in circulation, it lost, little by little, its imprint; its salient curves were blunted; and long use gave it a polish it did not have originally. The exact fact to which it owed its birth grew misty in retrospect, and form being, in a humble way, historical, the ballad became romantic and acquired the prestige of the remote.

Perhaps, therefore, it is time rather than the mode of their making which gives ballads their special character. They differ from other poems because we never, or hardly ever, hear them as they were originally. At some moment of its life, already, it may be, a long one, a ballad becomes public knowledge, and the subtle effect of the human emotions excited while it has been endlessly repeated may indeed have given it the value of a collective work.

It may be said that this is equally true of the old songs which were not written down for many years. But a ballad is not a song. Usually it holds a story: it is the fragment of an epic; sometimes it is plainly the summary of old chivalrous poems of which only the essence has been kept for the purposes of a short recitation and to make a rapid impression on simple minds. Or else the ballad relates for a district a glorious or ill-omened incident which is known to all and has familiar heroes, so that, however allusively the poet expresses himself, he is sure of being understood even by the most ignorant.

The ballad exists everywhere in Europe, but is most copious and lively in the outlying regions, in Spain in the south and in Scandinavia in the north. Great Britain, insular and isolated, produced many ballads, especially on the Border, the scene in old days of so many sanguinary encounters of Scots and English.

We have spoken of the popular rhymes, dating from the fourteenth century, on Robin Hood, bowman and outlaw, but the ballads, a whole cycle of them, which are consecrated to his exploits do not go back further than the sixteenth century. While the existence of numerous ballads in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries may be conjectured, there are only two which can cer-

tainly be placed before the Renascence: *Chevy Chase* and *The Nut-brown Maid.*

Chevy Chase[1] is the oldest and the finest of the epical ballads. In theme and sentiment it is akin to *Roland* or *Byrhtnoth.* It is at least half-historical, its subject the struggle between Percy of Northumberland and the Douglas of Scotland at the beginning of the fifteenth century. The manners it reveals are at once violent and chivalrous, a love of battle combining with generosity to enemies. But that which in *Byrhtnoth* has an epic swing is here lyrical. This ballad is a sung recitation, a sort of melopœia. Already it has the metre which was to be pre-eminently that of the ballads, the seven-accented line in two divisions (4+3) and the rhymes in couples. The division is so fixed that the couplet can be considered as a quatrain:

The Persé owt off Northombarlonde
An avowe to God mayd he
That he wold hunt in the mountayns
Off Chyviat within days three.

The division often leads to the rhyming of the first and third sections, giving quatrains with cross-rhymes (*abab*). The tendency to regularise rhythm also has the effect in the later ballads of making the lines syllabic, that is to say alternately of eight and six syllables. In *Chevy Chase* the verse is primitive in its rudeness and has the minimum of ornament.

There is in this ballad a manifest basis of realism. It tells an incident all too truly characteristic of life on the Border, where there was little distinction between warfare and brigandage. Percy wishes to hunt in enemy country, less for love of the deer than to provoke his adversary. He rejoices greatly when, after the hunt, the Douglas arrives and the battle begins. Yet these wild opponents have the spirit of chivalry: the Douglas, in order to spare "guiltless men," proposes to Percy to meet him in single combat. But the ardour of Percy's followers, who would think it shame to leave all the danger to their chief, cannot be restrained, and the fight is general. When the Douglas is slain, Percy, who a minute before had been drunk with battle, gives rein, before the body of his enemy, to artless grief and sincere admiration:

[1] Text in Morris and Skeat, *Specimens*, op cit.

The Persé leanyde on his brande, and sawe the Duglas de;
He tooke the dede man be the hande, and sayd, Wo ys me for the!
To have savyde thy lyffe I would have partyd with my landes for years thre,
For a better man of hart, nare of hand, was not in all the north countrè.

The minstrel who so vigorously sings the fine sword-play is mindful of the evils to which such violence will give rise:

The chyld may rue that ys un-borne, it was the more pittè.

Sincere emotion is betrayed by these very contradictions. The poem wins us by the truthfulness of its feeling as of its restrained decoration and its details. Whether or not the details be strictly historical, we follow the vicissitudes of the conflict, the part played by the English bowmen, the tactics of the Douglas when he caused his men to advance in scattered formation, the hand-to-hand struggle.

There is a sort of Homeric impartiality in this war ballad. The Percy and the Douglas show equal heroism, although their virtues are opposed like those of an Achilles and a Hector. The poet's English patriotism is clearly discovered only at the end. When he hears that the Douglas is slain, the king of Scotland is in despair, but Henry IV., learning Percy's death, is undismayed in his pride:

God have merci on his soll, sayd kyng Harry, Good Lord, yf thy will it be!
I have a hondrith captayns in Ynglonde, he sayd, as good as ever was hee:
But Persè, and I brook my lyffe, thy deth well quyte[1] shall be.

He then despatches an army which wins the victory of Humbledon.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the importance of this short literary epic. Its success was not confined to the people, but extended to men of letters and poets. Sir Philip Sidney wrote of it about 1581:

I never heard the old song of Piercy and Douglas, that I found not my heart more moved than with a trumpet; and yet it is sung but by some blind crowder with no rougher voice than rude stile; which being so evil apparelled in the dust and cobweb of that uncivil age, what would it work trimmed in the gorgeous elegance of Pindar?

As though to obey Sidney's wish, a poet of the first years of the seventeenth century gave to the ballad, without deforming it overmuch, a correct form, modernised language and regular

[1] Requited.

rhythm. Addison, in the full stream of the classical period, read it in this version, which yet seemed to him ancient, and praised it discriminatingly in the *Spectator*. He realised the ballad's Homeric qualities, and used it as a text to preach that the beautiful is the simple. He loved it as Molière loved the "old song of Henry IV. of France" and for the same qualities, just style and natural feeling. Finally Bishop Percy (1765) inserted the oldest text in his *Reliques*, and *Chevy Chase* was one of the mediæval poems which induced Romanticism. Soon the very irregularity of its verses was found to have a special charm, and this rudeness inspired Coleridge to give a new harmony to his *Ancient Mariner* and, above all, to his *Christabel*. It is sincerity of tone, like that of *Chevy Chase*, which, down the ages and among extravagances and artifices, brings back to natural truth the poetry which has left nature too far behind.

Such fine romantic ballads as *Sir Patrick Spens, Clerk Saunders* and *Child Waters* cannot be certainly ascribed to the fifteenth century, for the versions of them which have reached us are all of later date. But a poem of a special kind, which encloses the elements of a simple ballad in the framework of a courtly *disputoison*, may be claimed for this century.

A lady is represented as using the story of *The Nut-brown Maid*[1] to free women of the reproach of inconstancy constantly levied at them by men. The dark maid, who is a baron's daughter, is visited by her lover whom she believes to be a squire of low degree, and who comes to bid her farewell because he has killed a man and must hide in the woods as an outlaw. But neither his picture of a life of pains and peril, nor even his avowal that he has another mistress, can bend her from her will to follow him for love's sake. He has but proved her, as Griselda was proved, and, sure of her heart, he reveals himself as an earl's son who will make her lady of his heritage in Westmorland.

There cannot here be question of a popular composition. Nothing could be more artistic than these thirty six-lined stanzas with their alternating refrains. Each stanza has lines of seven accents, divided in 2+2+3, and a system of multiplied rhymes puts very severe constraint upon the poet. Yet the simplicity of style and sincerity of tone do not at all suffer. While the lady, who may be supposed to be the author, plays the part of the Nut-

[1] Text in Morris and Skeat, *Specimens*, op. cit.

brown Maid, the other speaker takes that of the outlaw. There is a dialogue, each of them in turn speaking a stanza with its refrain. The dramatic interest and liveliness thus given to the little poem cause its thesis to be forgotten in its story. The unadorned stylistic fabric, which admirably renders emotion, does not lack broad images, such as those in the first answer of the enamoured lady when her beloved announces his crime and banishment to her:

> O lord, what is this worldys blysse that changeth as the mone!
> My somers day in lusty may is derked before the none.
> I here you say, farewell: Nay, nay, we départ nat so sone.
> Why say ye so? wheder wyll ye go? Alas! what have ye done?
> All my welfàre to sorrowe and care sholde chaunge, yf ye were gone;
> For in my mynde, of all mankynde I love but you alone.

If this poem be not a popular ballad but the work of a courtly poet, it does but show the degree to which even the learned poetry of the time could absorb popular songs and be inspired by them. In this echo of some humble love-ballad there is not one false note. Whoever can bring himself to read the lamentable imitation of it which Matthew Prior made in the beginning of the eighteenth century, and in which everything is falsified, both style and sentiment, will recognise that the essence of poetry existed in this disinherited fifteenth century as it did not in the classical period. The *Nut-brown Maid*, which was printed in 1502, belongs incontestably to the reign of Henry VII.

4. *The Drama of the Middle Ages.*[1]—It is with the drama as with the ballad. It cannot be said to have been either created or fully developed in the fifteenth century. But this was the period in which most of the cycles of the Christian theatre were compiled and in which the miracle plays, not yet subject to competition from dramatic performances of a more modern kind,

[1] For the history of the English theatre in the Middle Ages, see E. K. Chambers, *The Mediæval Stage*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1903); J. J. Jusserand, *Le Théâtre en Angleterre jusqu'aux prédécesseurs immédiats de Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1881); A. W. Ward, *History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (1899); C. M. Gayley, *Plays of Our Forefathers, and some of the Traditions upon which they were Founded* (New York, 1909); W. Creizenach, *Geschichte des neueren Dramas*, 5 vols. (Halle, 1893-1916). For texts, see A. W. Pollard, *English Miracle Plays, Moralities and Interludes* (Oxford, 1890 et seq.). The plays of the different towns—Chester, Coventry, Towneley, York, etc.—have been published separately. Pieces excellently selected as representative of the development of the drama are given by J. M. Manly in vol. i. of his *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearian Drama*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1900-1903).

reached their climax. It is therefore fitting to determine the characteristics of the mediæval dramatic art of England in this rather than in another century.

Such characteristics are, in point of fact, few in number.

The religious theatre is an institution of Christianity which had the same origin and a like evolution in all the Christian countries of Europe, so much so that it is seen wrongly or out of perspective if it be studied in one country alone. In that great common fatherland which was Christendom in the Middle Ages, nations were, from the spiritual point of view, hardly more than are to-day the provinces of a centralised state. Therefore to relate the history of the Christian drama of England is, in many respects, little more than to repeat what is known of that of France. It is thus possible to deal with the subject allusively and rapidly.

Everyone knows that this drama was an offshoot of the liturgy, which, with its solemn staging, lent itself well to dramatic development. The germs of the drama were in the offices of the Church, in the chants alternating between the priest and the congregation or the choir which represented it, the recitative passages, the plastic decoration, the processions, the ritual of movement and gesture. It was in the form of "tropes," or declamation in dialogues, that drama made its first appearance. Two tropes of the Easter office, which were declaimed in England in the tenth and eleventh centuries, before as well as after the Norman Conquest, have been preserved, and make it almost certain that, with or without the Conquest, religious drama would have evolved in England as in every Christian country.

First given within the church and declaimed in Latin, these dialogues developed into small dramas when they left the church and were played in the porch and when they exchanged Latin for the vernacular, two conditions essential to the needed liberty. The best-known example of a transitional play of this kind is *Adam*, which was written in French, but by a Norman or Anglo-Norman of the twelfth century, and which seems to have been performed not in France, but in England. Very interesting because of its place at the origin of two great dramatic literatures, it is so also intrinsically. Restrained, even a little bare, but grave in thought, its sentiment just, decided and precise, and its language vigorous, it has a real value. It comprises three parts—the fall

of Adam and Eve, the death of Abel, and a procession of the prophets who announce the coming of the Redeemer. The scene of Eve's temptation by the devil shows a certain refinement and some poetic grace. Almost all and the best characters of the religious drama are to be found in this old Anglo-Norman play.

But it was necessary for this drama to emancipate itself completely from the Church. It had to leave the church precincts for the highways, to take up its station in the market-place or the streets. Moreover, before the plays could be popular, they had to abandon not only Latin, as in France, but French also. It was essential that their language should be English.

Dramatic progress is connected with the development of the fairs, the increase of wealth, the rise of the burgher class, the prosperity of corporations, and finally the emancipation of the vulgar tongue. Little by little drama severed its connection not only with the Church, but also with the clergy, who at first provided all the actors. Not without resistance from the clerks, the mendicant friars and the Franciscans, who lost their monopoly, the actors came to be laymen. As a rule, henceforth, the clergy were no more than the playwrights. This change became marked and was accelerated from the second half of the thirteenth century onwards. The first plays in English were performed under Henry III., and at the same time a certain realism was introduced upon the stage.

In this reign also the great cyclical representations had their beginning, those in which the sacred history relating to an annual feast was depicted in successive scenes on the holiday. The Easter and Christmas cycles were the first in date, but the institution in 1264 of the feast of Corpus Christi and its generalisation early in the next century gave this day pre-eminence. The Easter and Nativity cycles, hitherto distinct, were united and were performed together on Corpus Christi day, which was less crowded with other events than Christmas and Easter day and which fell in the summer. All Holy Writ was thus staged at the same time and place, all the great facts of religious history reproduced in sight of the people. In some places, as in Chester, the performance was on Whitsunday rather than on Corpus Christi day.

Some towns, because of the fame of their fairs or the powerful organisation of their gilds, became celebrated for these representations, and the English miracle-plays we now possess are

named after the places in which they were given. The cycle, embracing the whole of sacred history, is always the same, but differs locally in detail, mood, language and versification, its tone being more dignified or homelier in one place than in another. The plays of Chester and Coventry—Shakespeare may, as a child, have seen these last—those of Woodkirk Abbey, near Wakefield, called the Towneley Plays, and those of York have been preserved, as well as fragments of the Digby, Newcastle and Dublin plays. Other towns had cycles which have been lost.

The cycles were first compiled in the fourteenth century, but we possess them only as they were rearranged in the fifteenth, or even the sixteenth, for some were played until the theatre of the Renascence was nearing its apotheosis.

The popularity of the miracle-plays in the fourteenth century is attested by Chaucer, who relates in his Miller's Tale of Absolon, the merry clerk, that

> Sometyme to shewe his lightnesse and maistyre
> He playeth Heródes on a scaffold hye;

and who, in the play of the Flood, shows the Miller himself to be well informed about Noah's quarrels with his wife. Langland gives a yet more significant proof of the influence of the theatre, for he has cast more than one scene of *Piers Plowman* in the mould of the miracle-plays.

We can picture one of these immense representations, for instance that at York on Corpus Christi day.[1] Every gild in the town contributed to it, and the festivities included forty-eight plays which comprised the whole of Scripture. We know not only the order of the plays, but also the gild responsible for each of them, appropriately chosen as far as possible. To the Armourers fell the expulsion from Paradise (the flaming sword), to the Shipwrights the building of the Ark, to the Fishermen and Mariners the Flood, to the Chandlers the shepherds following the star, to the Goldsmiths the adoration of the Magi, to the Bakers the Last Supper, to the Pinners and Painters the Crucifixion, to the Butchers the Mortification of Christ, to the Scriveners Doubting Thomas, and so forth.

An idea of the staging can be had if the meaning of pageant, a word of uncertain etymology, be understood. It sometimes

[1] See H. Morley, *English Writers*, vol. iv., op. cit.

referred to the platform on which a play was given, sometimes to the representation itself. Some platforms were fixed in a particular place, and the audience went from one to another of them, following the series of the plays. But elsewhere the pageant was mounted on wheels and movable, and the spectators stayed in one spot while these stages on wheels successively paused before them, gave their performance, and passed on to another point where the performance was repeated. Most of the gilds had their own pageants. Sometimes the action made several pageants necessary for one play, for instance one for Paradise, one for the earth and one for Hell. Each included, beneath the stage, a room in which actors spent the intervals between their appearances and properties were kept.

The duration of the performances varied with the number of the plays, but was always several days. In Chester, where the series included only twenty-four plays, it took three days. The first nine were given on Whit Monday, nine more on Whit Tuesday and the last six on the Wednesday.

What we know of the English theatre in the fifteenth century shows that it was very powerfully organised, that the gilds took an important part in its development, and that there was long local resistance to the engrossing of the plays by professional actors. In fact, its vitality and popularity were such as were surpassed nowhere. The number and diversity of the provincial centres, particularly in the north and the west, prove how widespread was the passion for the theatre.

Two points in which the English differed from the French drama must be noted. In England, although all the plays of the period are generally called miracle-plays, there are hardly any traces of what the French call *miracles,* that is plays concerned especially with the Virgin and the saints, as distinguished from the *mystères* which were founded on Holy Writ. All the cycles preserved in England are of scenes from the Bible. Secondly, the growth of the religious theatre was less disturbed in England than in France, and its development checked less early. It continued to flourish when the Renascence was in full swing, so firmly was it established in local custom and popular favour.

The extant English cycles offer another advantage to modern students. While the French mysteries in the collection compiled by the Brothers Greban are, on the whole, mediocre and

monotonous, there is in the very various English plays a dignified emotion or a homely swing which sometimes makes itself felt through the awkwardness and rudeness of the style. It may be said that these plays, in the form in which they have reached us, prove that great artistic effort, no less real where it was mistaken, went to their making. They are almost all written in complicated and difficult stanzas, which have the fault that they are apt to sacrifice dramatic quality to lyricism. There are stanzas which multiply their rhymes and unite lines different in measure—as *aaabab* or *aaabaaab* or *aaaabcccb*, *b* standing for a short two-accented line among others usually of four accents. But while the stanza is learned, the rhythm is, as a rule, unformed and metrical padding abounds. The principal defect is due to the unfitness of such stanzas to render dramatic movement or easy-going dialogue. The difficulty of finding a metre appropriate to drama was the great obstacle to dramatic progress until nearly the end of the sixteenth century. The unknown authors of the miracle-plays are not poets enough to animate their awkward stanzas. Yet they are, at moments, capable of pathos, and more frequently there is full-flavoured comedy in their scenes.

As elsewhere, the religious drama had a value due to the simple grandeur of the total conception, and the artlessness of the means used to call up the whole of Scripture before the people is disarming. The poets effaced themselves before their subjects. They had no freedom of invention, hardly of composition, were debarred from discovering motives for action except within strict limits. Since the stories were known to everyone, the principal interest was in the spectacles. Only here and there and accidentally does the author himself intervene, analysing passions or sentiments.

This happens in the play *Abraham and Isaac*,[1] which was written in the fifteenth century and belongs to an unknown cycle. It has one scene of two hundred lines, than which nothing could be more pathetic. It is that which depicts the conflicting sentiments of the father who has the will to obey God, but is stayed by love for his child, and of the son divided between submission to his father and fear of death. Little Isaac trembles before the gleaming sword, thinks of his mother in grief, asks for the fatal stroke yet would avert it. The *Iphigenia* of Euripides has not

[1] See, for text, E. Smith and Le Toulmin, *Anglia*, vol. vii. (1884).

more feeling, nor Shakespeare's *King John* when little Prince Arthur implores his executioner. We are irresistibly moved to tears; moral emotion and physical suffering are mingled. The only defect of this touching scene is its slowness, which has a slightly monotonous effect. The succeeding scene, in which Isaac, saved from death, expresses his childish joy and tenderly thanks the ram sacrificed in his stead, is very charmingly artless.

It is, however, in comic passages that the English playwrights show most go and originality. Comedy in the Middle Ages often mingled, in varying proportions, with solemn themes, in concession to a public condemned to listen to many an edifying declamation. Comedy of this sort has never been more developed than in certain English cycles. We have spoken of the fortunes of the fabliau in Great Britain, its progress in the hands of Chaucer, and the part it assigned to nature and observation. It has also an important place in some of the English plays, especially the Towneley Plays, which are more rustic than the others. In these, the fabliau is not in the unfinished state of a rough sketch, but has been retouched, again and again, and betrays a long experience of scenic effects. The complicated stanza which contains it, to which we have already alluded, is proof of real artistic labour.

It was only in the comic parts of the plays that their authors were fully independent, in the passages which owed nothing to Holy Writ saving the scenes in which they could safely be introduced. Sometimes the playwright enlivened secondary biblical characters; sometimes he entirely invented characters in order to provide comic relief where the gloom was heaviest. Thus a dramatist cheered the first human tragedy by the gift of a servant named Garcio to Cain, while others gave a realistic vigour to the detractors of the Blessed Virgin, to the soldiers sent to kill the Innocents, to the Pharisees who brought before Christ the woman taken in adultery, to the beadle of Pontius Pilate, to the workmen who set up the Cross, to the soldiers who watched by Christ's sepulchre. There was nothing to prevent them from lending the manners and speech of the common people they knew to these supernumeraries. Shakespeare and his rivals did exactly the same thing, kept the tragic central pattern of their source often intact, and added to it a comic border of their own.

Of the English comic scenes, two took up more space than

others in the Towneley Plays,[1] those concerned respectively with Noah's wife and with the shepherds who followed the star.

Noah's quarrels with his wife, when he has to make her enter the ark, are very lively. He is most respectful of the divine injunction, but cowed by his mate, who is the typical scold of the fabliaux, shrewish, contradictious, stormy, giving blow for blow. Frightened as she is of the Flood, the arrangements of the Ark do not please her, and she has barely entered it when she takes herself off to spin alone in a corner. Her husband and her sons and daughters implore her vainly: she will not budge. But no sooner does Noah tell her to do just as she likes than she changes her mind and comes on board. She is still, however, in a bad temper, and Noah has to beat her soundly before things are in train. From the moment of her beating Mrs. Noah is appeased and becomes a charming travelling-companion, helping to navigate the ark and send forth the birds, all her talk good sense and kindliness.

The broad comedy of this character in no way lessens the piety of the play, and occurs amid such artless simplicity that it is hardly discordant. Goodman Noah conversing with the Lord, monologuing as he builds the Ark, describing what he does as he goes along and complaining of his stiff back, and the concluding ingenious dialogue which suggests the various incidents of the voyage: all this makes a homely, cheerful whole, in which the buffoonery is not out of place.

The same mingling of simple piety and farce goes to make the nativity-play, but here the farce is more developed and almost constitutes an independent comedy in rustic northern dialect.

With the honest shepherds, who appear telling the troubles of their life—hard winters, the oppression of gentlemen—or who complain of the cantankerousness of their wives, there mingles a certain Mak, a cunning scamp, almost a precursor of the Shakespearian Autolycus. The action of the farce is that he steals a sheep from the others and conceals it, and that his theft is discovered. The sheep is put in a cradle, and Mak's wife, on her bed, groans as though she were just delivered of a child. When one of the good shepherds wants to give the baby a sixpence, the trick is exposed. And no sooner has Mak been tossed

[1] *Towneley Plays* (Early English Text Society, Extra Series, lxxi., 1897).

in punishment than the angel begins to sing "Gloria in Excelsis;" and the good shepherds, led by the star, set out for the Crib, discoursing on the angel's beautiful song and on the prophecies. Before the Crib their demeanour is the same as before the cradle of the sham baby. They are touched by the infant's charm; they bring him simple presents, one a bird, another cherries—at Christmas time!—the third a ball to play at tennis. Their words of adoration alternate with their pity for the frailty and tininess and the poverty of the Divine Child.

It is very remarkable that in these two plays, *Noah* and the *Nativity*, the very brisk and copious comic element does not clash with the religious sentiment. This is due to the heartiness of the comedy, which has neither reservations nor irony. It does not imperil the dignity of the play to which it belongs. It is not destructive. It can be reconciled with faith and tender emotion. It is at once bold and artless. We shall see that, for like reasons, the comic blends easily with romantic or tragic elements in the best of the Renascence dramas. On the other hand, the cynical realism of *Maître Patelin*, also a fifteenth-century work, would be hard to imagine in a religious frame. *Maître Patelin*, with a theme somewhat analogous to the Mak episode, is markedly superior to the artless Towneley Play in refinement of analysis and pointed wit, but has a fundamental harshness, a certain dryness and cruelty. Nor is the French play in any sense rustic: it does not breathe the healthy country air which surrounds the shepherds of the *Nativity* and good-for-nothing, sheep-stealing Mak. In differences of this kind, rather than in a diversity of theory, the profound causes are to be discerned for the eventual triumph in English drama and rejection by French drama of the mingling of the tragic and the comic.

The earliest moralities preserved in England also belong to the fifteenth century. Later born than the mysteries, which are linked up with the epical period of the Middle Ages, the moralities are a product of the allegorical period. To the plays taken from the Bible, they are as is the *Roman de la Rose* to the old epics. For the characters of sacred history they substitute abstractions, vices or virtues. They are at their origin as much penetrated as the miracle-plays with Christian teaching, but they have a more intellectual character. While a miracle-play is essentially a spectacle, appealing primarily to the sight, a morality

demands greater attention to the spoken word. Its text is more important than its scenery.

Although generally, as we pass from the miracle-plays to the moralities, we seem to go from the greater to the less great, to what is less alive and more coldly and artificially constructed, the morality must none the less be recognised to mark a necessary stage and, in a sense, a considerable advance in the progress towards the modern drama. The author of a morality can arrange his subject freely, attempt construction and unity. He is led to analyse human qualities and defects, to emphasise psychological characteristics. Miserliness, for instance, cannot be presented without study of the character of a miser. In this way the morality, even the religious morality, prepared drama for emancipation from religion. Its theme is the struggle of the forces of good and evil which contest for the human soul. This problem continued to confront the poet who was no longer inspired by the Christian faith. The permanent basis of every dramatic work had been discovered.

The material conditions of the theatre were transformed. Instead of multiplied, often movable pageants, the morality used a single, unchanging stage. In the earliest extant English morality, the *Castell of Perseverance*[1] (middle fifteenth century), the unchanging scene showed a castle in its centre, and in its corners scaffolds for the World, the Flesh, the Devil, and God. As the miracle-plays led to the numerous and changing scenes of historical drama, so *the moralities prepared the way for tragedies* restricted to one plot.

The exact date at which the morality had its rise is unknown. It was doubtless not later than the middle of the fourteenth century, not far removed in time from Langland's great religious *satire which was so filled with animated, almost scenic moral* allegories. Allegories were early introduced into the miracle-plays. In the Coventry cycle there are such characters as Contemplation, Calumny, Detraction, Truth, Justice, Peace, Death; and, in the Digby Mysteries, especially in the play on Mary Magdalene, the World, Luxury and Curiosity figure, as well as the Seven Deadly Sins.

In the *Castell of Perseverance*, the oldest and longest of the moralities, the reign of allegory is undisputed. "Humanum

[1] Partly printed by A. W. Pollard in *English Miracle Plays*, op. cit.

genus," placed between his good and his bad angel and long the slave of Pleasure and Folly, takes refuge in the Castle of Perseverance with the Christian virtues. He is seduced by Covetousness, who makes his way into the castle and prevails on him to leave it. But before his death, as his soul is about to be carried to hell, he is saved by the intervention of Peace and Mercy.

An analogous conception recurs in the shorter moralities, *Mankind*, approximately of the same date, and *Mundus et Infans* and *Hyckescorner*,[1] which belong to the early sixteenth century. These plays are, however, less tensely grave and have comic passages. In *Mankind* it is the demon Tityvillus whose jokes give the comic relief, while in *Hyckescorner* the scamp who names the piece plays malicious tricks with his companions in debauchery, Free Will and Imagination.

These moralities, by turns cold and scholastic or comic in a very mediocre degree, have little merit. But another of the same period is really impressive and might well be called the masterpiece of its kind, the play of *Everyman*.[2] For long it was believed to have originated in Holland, having been printed in Dutch as early as 1495 and before any edition of the English text. To-day, however, the dominant opinion is that the play was born in England, where certainly it seems to have been very popular down to the Reformation.

The tragedy is that of Christian death, and it is staged with poignant restraint and force. God sends Death to summon Everyman, and he, in anguish, implores a respite, and obtains only a few hours to gather together the friends who shall go with him on his supreme journey. Everyman appeals vainly to Fellowship, his boon companion, to Kindred and to Goods. None of them will hearken to him. Then he remembers Good Deeds, whom he has long abandoned, who is lying on the ground, weak and miserable, but who hears his prayer, helps him, and recommends to him her sister, Knowledge. Knowledge sends him to Confession, and Everyman, shriven of sin, is ready to meet God. At the moment at which he reaches the grave, Beauty, Strength, Discretion and Five-Wits depart, in spite of their promise to follow him. Knowledge would go with him but cannot. Only

[1] These three moralities are printed by J. M. Manly in *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearian Drama*, op. cit.

[2] Printed by F. Sidgwick (1902), by Pollard, in *Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse* (1903), and by Farmer, Early English Drama Publications (1906).

Good Deeds is left; she alone is not vain and will plead for him. Everyman dies pure of sin and forgiven.

The conception is simple and enthralling. There is here no classical influence, and yet nothing could be more classically constructed. The beauty of the work is its sincerity. There is an inevitability in the subject. In a sense, every dramatic work, whether ancient or modern, seems frivolous by the side of this essential tragedy. It has recently been revived in Great Britain and the United States and has made a profound impression on its audiences. All the moralities, all controversial works which followed *Everyman,* have something small and ephemeral as compared with it. It would be a complete masterpiece were its form less naked, less dull, less devoid of brilliancy. The artistic impulse seems wholly to have exhausted itself on the construction, which is itself no more than a severe staging of the transcendent message of Christianity.

After the fifteenth century the miracle-plays were still performed, but their form had been fixed and was not changed henceforth. The morality, on the other hand, had an active life, and was used by the dramatists of the Renascence and the Reformation as a means to their ends.

5. *Prose in the Fifteenth Century.*[1]—English prose of the fifteenth century amounts to little if the name be reserved for writings which have originality and some artistic value. There was the same reason for inferiority as in the preceding period: Latin still attracted writers whose purpose was not strictly utilitarian or who were more than mere translators. The bold movement of Wyclif and his partisans had, moreover, been checked. The first half of the fifteenth century was a period of narrow orthodoxy in which the cruelly persecuted Lollards were reduced to silence. Only in the second half of this century did a few rare works which deserve notice appear in English prose. It would, however, be wrong to conclude from this dearth that the spread of reading and learning had been arrested. Education made its way in spite of foreign and civil wars and was diffused. The number of persons able to read and write increased and the first epistolary collections were made. The lateness of English as compared to continental prose is principally due to the fact that it

[1] For extracts from prose-writers of the fifteenth century see A. W. Pollard, *Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse* (1903), and Morris and Skeat, *Specimens,* op. cit.

was still imitative and contented itself with translations of numerous foreign and especially French books which continued completely to satisfy the reading public. In this century men had not yet abandoned the paths of the Middle Ages. Literary sentiment was still not national, which is to say that there was as yet no artistic ideal.

It was the desire to bring the last Lollards back to orthodoxy which decided the learned Reginald Pecock (1395?-1460?) to write in English. This Welshman, who had taken orders and become bishop, first of St. Asaph and then of Chichester, was, as early as 1447, disquieting the clergy by the arguments he used to defend them, and he put the finishing touch to their indignation in 1455 by his *Repression of Overmuch Blaming the Clergy*,[1] in which he defends images, pilgrimages, the temporal goods of the Church, the hierarchy, the papacy, the friars and the monks, but founds his argument only on reason. He puts natural law above Scripture and the sacraments. He has recourse only to logic and does not defer to the principle of authority.

To Wyclif and his disciples, who founded all their faith on Holy Writ, he retorted by invoking, as superior to the Scriptures, "the boke of lawe of kinde writen in mennis soulis with the finger of God." The words of Scripture ought, he says, to be "interpretid and brought forto accorde with the doom of resoun in thilk mater; and the doom of resoun oughte not forto be expowned, glosid, interpretid and broughte forto accorde with the seid outward writing in Holi Scripture."

To establish these principles in the vulgar tongue was in those days to create a scandal among the orthodox, the very class whom Pecock professed to champion. It was criminal to reason about religion with so much independence, to argue with heretics, to bring the people into these disputes by speaking to them in their own language.

Summoned to disown his book or go to the stake, Pecock chose disavowal, and not he, but his book, was burnt.

This logician, as intrepid as indiscreet, stands in isolation, and was afterwards mistaken by the Protestants for an adherent. He was understood neither by his own nor by the following century.

His prose shows a marked advance on that of his prede-

[1] Ed. C. Babington for Rolls Series, 2 vols. (1860).

cessors. He had clarity, the gift of choosing homely examples, and a wealth of words. His vocabulary was even excessive: drawing on its double source, English and French, he is tautological and redundant.

Sir John Fortescue [1] (1394?-1476?) was a lawyer who wrote mainly in Latin. Like Pecock, he based his arguments on the law of nature, for instance in his *De Natura Legis Naturæ*, but his object is to establish the right to the throne of Henry VI., the grandson of the Lancastrian usurper. He premises that there are three kinds of government—absolute and monarchical, republican, constitutional and monarchical. The Lancastrians are legitimate kings because of the English constitution. Fortescue was the first to admire the constitution of his country, which he praises in his *De Laudibus Legum Angliæ* (1468-70).

When the Lancastrian cause was lost, Fortescue went over to the Yorkists and wrote, this time in English, his little treatise of forty pages on the *Governance of England*. He had stayed in France with Henry VI. when this king was a fugitive, and he takes France as the type of an absolute, England as that of a limited, monarchy. This writer affords the first example of national political pride. He admires his own country, as compared with France, for its greater liberty and more abundant riches, his patriotism leading him so far that he celebrates the outstanding valour of his compatriot highwaymen. The French, he says, are, like the Scots, too cowardly to steal. "Ther is no *man hanged in Scotland in vii yere to gedur ffor robbery. . . .* But the Englysh man is off another corage. Ffor yff he be pouere, and see another man havynge rychesse, wich mey be taken ffrom hym be myghte, he will not spare to do so."

The *Paston Letters*,[2] the correspondence of the Paston family, are interesting rather to the historian than to the student of literature. While scholars, clerks and nobles still wrote in Latin, the middle class was taking to English. The letters have been preserved of three generations of the Pastons, a well-to-do Norfolk family, and they give much intimate and curious information about English life from 1422 to 1509. Passages are not lacking which suggest the barbarism of the period, but the picture

[1] *Sir John Fortescue, His Life and Works*, ed. Lord Clermont, 2 vols (1869) *On the Governance of England*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1885)
[2] Ed. J. Gairdner, 4 vols. (1901).

as a whole is of a very modern middle-class society, much engrossed by money matters, leases and the letting of land, the management of property, lawsuits, home comforts, domestic cleanliness. We learn what men read in those days and how severely they brought up their children. Dame Agnes inquires if her son Clement be working well at the Inns of Court, and begs his tutor that otherwise "he wyll trewly belassch hym, tyl he wyll amend, and so ded the last maystr, and the best thet ever he had, att Caumbrege." There is a sure and serious affection between husband and wife and they work together to establish the family fortunes. The wife shows great courage when the house is attacked by a band of enemies during her husband's absence.

There is nothing literary in these letters about business, all of them utilitarian, and they cannot be said to show that their writers used the English language easily and fluently. They managed to understand each other, nothing more.

English prose was still formless and indefinite, distributed among numerous local ways of speech, when in 1474 the first English printer began his work. William Caxton[1] (1421-91) has himself told how hampered he at first was by the anarchical state of his language. The unity constituted by the King's English in the fourteenth century had as yet been realised only in poetry. Evolution was, moreover, still in course, so that in his sixtieth year Caxton found the language very different from that spoken in his childhood. He asked himself how he could please everyone. To make himself more certain of being understood he sometimes places the French beside the English word, as *chasse* and *hunt*. He wrote as he habitually spoke, avoiding too rustic terms, aiming at the comprehension of clerks and gentlemen, having his books revised by Master John Skelton, poet laureate of Oxford University. He thus succeeded in being intelligible, and he hardly went beyond this modest ideal. He is a mediocre translator and the best of his prose occurs in his explanatory prefaces, in which he shows himself a good fellow and a man of cheerful disposition.

It is usual to number the discovery of printing among the causes of the Renascence. By helping the spread of knowledge it

[1] His prefaces and epilogues have been partly reprinted by W. Pollard in *Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse*, op. cit. See E. G. Duff, *William Caxton* (Chicago, 1905).

certainly favoured the great literary revolution which was at hand. But it is possible, at least in England, to ask whether its first effects were not to fortify and prolong the Middle Ages. To draw up a list of the books issued from the English printing presses during almost fifty years is to cast up the balance-sheet of the past. It is barely possible to discern, here and there in such a list, a book which heralds the new age.

Caxton himself had nothing of the humanist. He was a Kentishman, a member of the Mercers' Company, who at twenty years old left England for the Low Countries. He settled in Bruges and there acted as a consul responsible for the trading interests of his fellow-countrymen. His stay in Flanders acquainted him with the most civilised court in Western Europe, that of the Dukes of Burgundy, to whose dominions Flanders belonged. In this court, although a great appetite for art and learning was manifest, letters were still confined in the mediæval frames. It was with French literature that Caxton came to be impregnated, and to its propagation that he devoted his energies as translator and printer. Bruges was one of the first towns to take advantage of Gutenberg's invention, and Caxton, having been initiated by the printer Colard Mansion, finished an incomplete translation of the *Receuil des Histoires de Troye* by Raoul Lefèvre, chaplain to the Duke of Burgundy, and published it at Bruges in 1474. It was the first printed English book. The second was the translation of another French work, a moral and allegorical treatise on the game of chess.

When more than fifty years old Caxton returned to England, in 1476, and established the first English printing-press near Westminster Abbey. Amid much encouragement and protected by Earl Rivers and by the Duke of Gloucester, afterwards Richard III., he worked there until his death in 1491.

What is interesting is his choice of books for printing. He has right neither to the glory of having discovered printing, which belongs to Gutenberg and Schoeffer, nor to the glory of erudition won by the Aldi of Venice and the Etiennes of France, nor even to that of producing beautiful volumes. He was essentially a practical man, on the look-out for books likely to please, and also a man whose personal tastes were determined by his long sojourn on the Continent and by his age. But although his title to represent his nation has been questioned, it is impossible not to be

struck by the fact that the library he formed is very like that of the Paston family. It contains the same mixture of poetry, chivalrous romances, moral allegories and books of devotion.

He was a great admirer of Chaucer and printed the *Canterbury Tales* (1478) and *Troylus and Criseyde*, but he also found room for Lydgate and Gower.

He preferred prose, however, as a medium for the translations of French chivalrous romances which he made or had made—the *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, the *Boke of Histories of Jason*, the *Lyf of Charles the Grete*, the *Morte d'Arthur*, the *Foure Sonnes of Aymon*. It was also into prose that he translated the *Historye of Reynart the Foxe* from the Dutch.

Among works of piety issued from his press were the Hours of the Church, a life of Christ, and a translation of the *Golden Legend* which had the largest circulation of all his publications.

Nothing shows the mediæval character of his reading and his mind better than the Æneid he published in 1490, which is translated not from Virgil but from a baroque romance of the Middle Ages.

If it be remembered that Caxton's immediate successors, Wynkyn de Worde, Richard Pinson and the others, did not notably deviate from his lead in their choice of publications up to 1530, it becomes clear that the English Renascence began amid a considerable body of books which were penetrated by the mediæval spirit. It might even be thought, so nearly complete is the absence of the books properly called classical, that the country remained outside the current along which Europe was being swept towards Greek and Roman antiquity. But in justice it should be said that the English found it more convenient to procure books of the newer kind from continental publishers, and to keep their own presses, still few in number, for popular books written in their own language.

What is most remarkable, from the literary point of view, is the development of English prose for which Caxton, a mediocre writer, was responsible. French prose, of which he definitely perceived the qualities, was his ideal. He admired "the fair language of French, which was in prose so well and compendiously set and written, which methought I understood the sentence and substance of every matter" (*Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*). He himself aimed at a like clarity and like ease.

In producing prose renderings of the mediæval romances he followed the example of the French of the fifteenth century. He thus ensured a longer survival and wider popularity to these romances, which he made accessible to all men. In English, verse had hardly ever embellished them, and, had it not been for the minstrels, they would have fallen into neglect. Prose secured that the stories they enclosed became known. In more or less shortened form, these romances passed from hand to hand, the principal one of the wares the pedlar bore in his pack. In the chap-books of the Elizabethan period, they kept romance alive in the minds of simple people, awoke those dreams of extraordinary adventure to which many dramatists of the Renascence appealed and which others of them mocked. By means of these compilations, the Middle Ages were kept from dying altogether, and sank, instead, to deeper and deeper strata of consciousness. Whatever may have been the value of the new works which sprang of the Renascence, the old stories still made the first and the favourite appeal to popular imagination. They shared the rôle with the ballads, which were multiplied in the same period as they, and which often epitomised in a few verses stories like theirs.

Among the prose versions of old romances published by Caxton there was, however, one which was to be not only food for the people but also a feast for the fastidious. Caxton was well inspired on the day he printed Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*.[1] He tells us that when he had published the noble feats of Hector, Charlemagne and Godfrey of Bouillon, he was "instantly required" by "many noble and divers gentlemen" also to imprint those of Arthur who belonged to the realm of England. In reply, he pleaded that "divers men hold opinion that there was no such Arthur," yet allowed himself to be persuaded. The translation he used was ready to hand, having been made by Thomas Malory, knight, member of parliament and Lancastrian, who shared the misfortunes of his party and died in 1471. His translation was completed in 1469 and published in 1484.

Malory represents himself as translating a French book. In truth he seems to have had recourse to many books, so that his *Morte d'Arthur* is a compilation. He has brought together

[1] The original edition has been reprinted with notes and a commentary by H. O. Sommer, 3 vols. (1889-91). See also Globe Edition, E. Strachey (1893); and Kittredge, *Who Was Sir Thomas Malory?* (Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, vol. v.).

scattered romances and co-ordinated them, without eliminating the traces of disparity. In spite, however, of the immense parentheses which recount the separate adventures of Sir Balin, Sir Pelleas, Sir Palomides, Sir Bors, the history of Tristram and Isoud, we can distinguish in his work the lines of a dominant story, that of Arthur, which is logically followed by the tale of the Sangreal. Malory tells of Arthur's triumphant reign, the unfaithfulness of his wife Guenever who takes Launcelot for her lover, Launcelot's punishment by the failure of his quest of the Sangreal, the finding of which is reserved for the purer Galahad. He shows the knights disaffected to the king because of Guenever's sin, and relates Mordred's revolt and Arthur's death. The book ends religiously, for Guenever becomes a nun and Launcelot a hermit. Romantic though it be, we feel that it bears a relation to actualities. The painter of the evils of civil war in this legendary kingdom was a victim of the Wars of the Roses, and the fact sometimes brings a moving gravity and melancholy into his pages.

But both this application to the author's own time and the moral lesson which unites the adventures are uncertain, vague and hesitating in Malory's work. Even the moral is inconsistent, for Launcelot and Guenever in their sin are cited as an example to true lovers. Hence the Puritan reproach, formulated by Roger Ascham: "the whole pleasure of whiche booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter and bold bawdrye." In fact, this over-loose compilation lacks unity both of thought and of plot.

It has, however, another unity, that of manner, tone and atmosphere. Malory transports us to a strange country in a distant world, unreal, impossible and yet imaginatively coherent—a country where all is tourneys and battles, where the only dwellings reared are castles, a country without agricultural life or trade, a region of mirage in which the marvellous is at home and fantastic personages are plausible.

It is the evocation of a vanished epoch, of a sort of golden age, a story of the Round Table written during atrocious civil conflict. It is a refuge, beneath hovering and all-diffused melancholy, from the hardships and crudities of the present.

The narrator of these fanciful tales found a style which fits them well—simple, even childish, monotonous, but harmonious

and having poetic cadences. A clear, transparent and smooth style with no fixed date, though it breathes a soft archaic odour. It betrays neither labour nor culture. The charm of this prose is that it is made up of poetic reminiscences inherited from a long line of earlier poems. The style is that of the fairy-tales which are told to little children, and makes a Frenchman think of Perrault's stories, but it is the product of a period which was less wise than Perrault's and of a narrator less self-conscious than he. It is delicious prose of a particular kind, although unfit for other than its own purpose, as is apparent when the author attempts to reason. But when he relates he reaches excellence. An artist like Tennyson could do no better than translate almost literally Malory's story of Arthur's death and of the colloquy between him and Sir Bedivere. There are even good judges who prefer Malory's simple prose to the too elaborate verses of the Victorian poet.

The literary importance and influence of this collection cannot be exaggerated. It is England's first book in poetic prose, and also the storehouse of those legends of the past which have most haunted English imaginations. It is the work which kept the chivalrous spirit alive among the literate, the poets and the gentry, while the people were fed by the chap-books. Whether such a book would have met with a like fortune in France is doubtful. The author does not sufficiently dominate his material for a French audience. He is incapable of making an explanation or giving a sign of self-consciousness. He repeats his tale like a marvelling child trying to tell faithfully what it has heard and not entirely understood. He gives a wide field to the imagination and does not trouble himself about the intelligence.

The first important prose work that appeared after Malory's was another translation from the French. It was Froissart's *Chronicles*, translated by John Bourchier, Lord Berners (1467-1533) [1] and published in 1523-5. Lord Berners' excellent prose, as animated, lively and highly coloured as his original, yet represents a return to the fourteenth century, as does also his other book, *Huon of Bordeaux*,[2] which contains the story of the dwarf Auberon. These books appeared when the humanist movement

[1] *Reprinted by W. P. Ker in Tudor Translations (1901-3)*

[2] Reprinted by the Early English Text Society, Extra Series, xl., xli., xliii. and l. (1882-7).

had begun, and the first troubles of the Reformation were manifesting themselves. Without abandoning French, writers were about to add to it the direct study of Latin or even Greek, and on occasion to prefer to it the southern languages. The same Lord Berners was a pioneer of the new prose and a precursor of the Euphuists in his translation of the *Golden Book of Marcus Aurelius* from the Spanish of Antonio de Guevara. He is the connecting-link between the two ages in prose, as Skelton and Douglas, on very different grounds, are in poetry.

BOOK III

THE PREPARATION FOR THE RENASCENCE (1516-1578)

CHAPTER I

THE PART OF THE HUMANISTS

1. *Special Characteristics of the English Renascence.*—The Renascence showed in England almost all the characteristics which it had throughout Europe: thought was liberated and broadened so that it broke its scholastic framework; destiny and morals ceased to be the matter only of dogma and became problematical; a rebellion against the spiritual authority was first incited by the Reformation, which was soon afterwards the enemy of this ally, the Renascence; men looked with a new wonder at the heavens and the earth as they were revealed by the discoveries of the navigators and astronomy; superior beauty was perceived in the literature of classical antiquity, particularly in the recently recovered works of ancient Greece.

At the same time, the Renascence had in England certain additional characteristics which were so special that they gave rise to a truly national literature. The difference was mainly in the time of flowering and in the quantitative mixture of elements, but it was also an outcome of the power each nation simultaneously acquired, when once it was enfranchised from the unifying Catholic discipline, of revealing its own character and of standing in opposition to other nations instead of blending with them. It was from the time of the Renascence that the various European nations began to follow the divergent paths which ended in the contrasts they now present.

The chief peculiarities of the English Renascence, as compared with the same movement in Italy and France, may be stated as follows.

The renewal affected literature later and more slowly in

England than in those countries. Not because humanism was tardily introduced, for England's initiation into humanism was, if subsequent to that of Italy, yet quite as early as that of France. But humanism in England had for a long time no decided effect on poetry and prose. The national language was still immature. Prose lacked a strong tradition and glorious precedents, and the best humanists still made use of Latin. It is significant that the two books which appeared in England in this period and attained to European fame—Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and Bacon's *Instauratio Magna* (1620)—were both written in Latin. As for verse, it had, since Chaucer, been irregularised, and it did not definitely regain equilibrium and measure until Spenser's work began in 1579: all the preceding years of the sixteenth century show no more than a series of incomplete experiments, ground which was won and then lost. *In consequence, English literature had its flowering season* when the magnificent Italian literature had already entered on its decadence, when France had produced Rabelais and Ronsard and his Pléiade, and Montaigne's essays were appearing. Malherbe was nine years old when Shakespeare was born. It was therefore in a generation enriched by all the substance of France and Italy that England realised for the first time her high literary ambitions.

Secondly, the Renascence held more aloof from the plastic arts in England than in Italy or even in France. The English Renascence occurred in a country which had no pictures or statues except those bought abroad, and in which the most determined Reformers were zealously protesting against images. It had therefore a more inward and moral effect than the similar movements on the Continent. It reached its triumph not before, but after, the Reformation, when the Anglican religion had spread throughout the country and was beginning, here and there, to be tinged with Calvinism. In so far as the Renascence was an aspiration to every form of beauty and the cult of every kind of energy, it was not quite at ease in the already Puritan atmosphere breathed in this country. There were doubtless free spirits in England, but they were rebels and notorious. A morality which was sincere and natural in the majority had, on pain of obloquy, to be assumed by the others. The total result was increased seriousness, increasing pangs of conscience, less serenity, and intensified passion in the matter of faith and conduct.

On the other hand, although the spread of Protestantism all over England caused her to break with the Middle Ages more decidedly than France and Italy, her literature remained more nearly mediæval than that of either of those countries. The fact is the more striking because literature in the preceding centuries had been a less direct expression of national sentiments in England than elsewhere. English literature had been almost all imported from France, had mainly consisted of translations and adaptations. It had not assumed a truly national shape. The greatest poet, Chaucer, had been essentially French. None the less, the truth remains that, although the Renascence and the Reformation beckoned to new paths, England was faithful to the cult of the past longer than the Continent. The fact is explained by the continuance of popular influences. While in France the Renascence was eminently aristocratic, in England it was always regardful of the masses. It preserved and increased the vogue of the ballads. The theatre, the home of the most magnificent product of the period, was accessible to all men, appealed to the humble as to the great. For the people follow in literature fashions derived from former days, hold to them tenaciously and do not abandon them.

A patriotism more and more intense and passionate, even aggressive and disdainful, favoured this continuity by glorifying the annals of the nation, its history, legends, traditions and antiquities. While this patriotism gave rise to an ambition to rival the masterpieces of Greece and Rome as well as those of Italy and France, it inspired at the same time antagonism to the foreign influences which seemed to threaten the national genius. It was an obstacle to Italianism, that most potent of the infatuations of the Renascence. It is impossible to say whether in England, in this century, Italy were more the object of wonder or of scandal, of admiration or of disapproval. Increasingly England felt and wished herself to be different from the rest of Christendom.

2. *The Beginnings of Humanism (1490-1578).*[1]—During

[1] For this chapter see the general histories of literature cited at the beginning: *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol iii, chap i; Courthope, *History of English Poetry*, vol. i. chap v. and vol ii. chap. i, Morley, *English Writers*, vol. vii.; Jusserand, *Histoire littéraire du Peuple anglais*, livre iv chap. i See also Green, *A Short History of the English People*, and G Saintsbury, *A History of*

impulse to react against the stiff, inert conception of society which had reigned for centuries.

More is in opposition to established ideas in almost every particular. He makes fun of scholasticism which barred the way to thought with dialectical forms. He establishes that Greek is superior to Latin philosophy, which he considers insignificant save for some writings of Seneca and Cicero. His hero Hythloday earns a right to the gratitude of the Utopians by introducing them to the works of Plato, Aristotle and Plutarch.

More is in revolt against the spirit of chivalry. As much a humanitarian as a humanist, his hatred and contempt for war are like Swift's. Soldiers are to him "men-slayers," and he makes little of the point of honour and of military glory, of all that made up the atmosphere of the admired romances which Caxton had lately broadcast through the land. War was, according to More, justifiable only in the last resort, and should be waged in a purely utilitarian spirit, using the tricks of espionage and treachery. Unwittingly he was taking up the same ground as Machiavelli, who at this moment was writing *Il Principe.*

He extols communism, forbids the acquisition of property, and, reverting to the ideas of Lycurgus, discredits gold, which he would put to the meanest uses. He would make work compulsory for all men, but only for nine hours a day. Thus theft would disappear from Utopia and there would be no occasion to apply the hard penal laws of England.

In More's mind there is an ideal of a life which would be easy for the whole community. He is not of those whose consolation for the miseries of this present life is a picture of the life to come, for he cites happiness as the end of existence. He protests against asceticism and the contempt of well-being and honourable pleasure. It is from him that Rabelais borrowed the doctrine of his abbey of Thélème.

Like all Utopians, More bases himself on faith in the goodness of human nature. He believes in it as did Rousseau. His disapproval of asceticism causes him to glorify the senses which reveal natural marvels and God who made nature. He is regardful of everything which pertains to the body, of bodily health, necessary to the health of the soul, and of the comfort of dwellings. The Utopians do not suffer a man to be either cruel to himself or "unkind to nature."



Sir Thomas More. Reproduced by permission from the Frick collection

In Utopia all religions are authorised and toleration is the law. Even the Christian religion, which has been introduced thither, enjoys no privileges. No religion has anything to recommend it beyond the examples it provides.

This book should be read as the exercise of a mind giving itself free play and unconcerned with the practical application of its own theories. More wrote in Latin, not for the people but for the learned. We are brought to ask, in astonishment, whether he did not, more than once, write against his own deep convictions. For the creator of this Utopia was a fervent Christian, a submissive Catholic, and an ascetic who wore a hair shirt. This apostle of toleration was, as chancellor, a persecutor of the first Protestants and ended by dying a martyr to his faith. The contrast between his *Utopia* and his own life betrays a principle of unreality. The ideas of his book were on a level with his intelligence rather than deeply rooted in his conscience.

Yet this book cannot be called the unstable product of a youthful imagination. More was thirty-eight years old when he wrote it, and more than one of its pages contain reflections suggested by his practical experience as a lawyer and a member of parliament. When he sees in the existing society "a conspiracy of the rich against the poor," he is not guilty of mere rhetoric. He supports his assertion by facts which are contemporary and English, the enclosures of land which were depopulating the countryside, especially in the southeast, the eviction of small tenants because rich landlords found that grazing farms were more profitable than their holdings. The lessened demand for workers on the land was causing great misery, so that "even a beast's life seems enviable" as compared with that of a labourer. When More attacks the barbarous penal laws he is aiming a blow at the executions with which, as a lawyer, he was too familiar in a country where twenty criminals could be seen hanging from a gallows in a row. He is the very antithesis of the judge Fortescue, who was proud of the bravery of English robbers. When he recommends houses of "a gorgeous and gallant sort," well lit by glazed windows, he is thinking of the healthy and pleasant dwellings he had seen in Holland and comparing them with the dark, inconvenient and miserable homes of the London and England of his day.

This book is partly the work of a dreamer led by his fancy

and a logician who systematises his ideas. But it is also written by a satirist who attacks the errors and evils bequeathed by the Middle Ages. It is unlikely that More thought his conception could be realised in its entirety, but he very heartily wished to awaken the desire for certain necessary changes.

His *Utopia* stands alone as representing England's literary contribution to pure humanism. Ten years after he wrote it More himself was drawn into the religious controversy, and obliged, whether he would or no, to abandon the sphere of intellectual exercises for that of narrow ecclesiastical quarrels in which he is next found.

It is a great pity that he did not write a work of such general interest as *Utopia* in English. His humanist's culture is not evinced only by his Latin writings. He left behind him certain pages in English which show, no less than *Utopia,* the degree to which this admirer of Plato was impregnated with Socratic dialectics. The dialogue between the old prisoner Anthony and his nephew Vincent, which More wrote in his prison, to prove that he was neither more unfortunate nor more of a prisoner than the rest of mankind, is so admirable that Socrates might have approved it or envied him its authorship. And if he be indeed the author of the historical fragment on Richard III. attributed to him, he must be recognised as a rival of Tacitus, so vivid is the portrait he paints, so strong his colours, so intense his attack. It is to this fragment that the atrocious, implacable figure which has remained in men's memory is due, the character on which Shakespeare founded his famous tragedy. Whether the picture conform to reality is doubtful, but artistically it is an astonishing success. It has unity of structure and effect far beyond anything hitherto achieved by an English chronicler.

The pages which prove More's solid classical culture represent only a part of his rich and complex personality, curious of everything in life and nature, conscious of the variety in the souls of various men. His favourite pastime was to observe the habits and instincts of animals. He had a spontaneous and most lively dramatic talent, and although he never wrote for the stage, he dramatised, in the driest controversial treatises, living and comic characters, who speak their own language or even their native dialect. His English prose abounds with such humorous passages as his predecessors lacked. It contains also many turns of

familiar talk, sayings and popular expressions which he seems to have been the first to coin or circulate. One wonders if he took them from current speech, or invented them entirely. His natural gaiety, "the kind and friendly cheerfulness with a little air of raillery" which was, Erasmus tells us, expressed on his face, seasons his prose, as it showed itself in his speech throughout his life and on the very scaffold. We do not know whether to praise him most for his humour or his wit.

Nevertheless, we cannot follow those who have called him the earliest of the modern English prose-writers. This humanist seems, if the doubtful case of *Richard III.* be excepted, to have done all his artistic work in Latin. His English prose is all improvisation, and he lets loose in it, without rule or measure, his extraordinary lawyer's flow of language. His latest critic calculates that some of his sentences are as much as four yards long, measured line by line in the original edition. He never sought to mould English prose, which then, above all things, needed to be made lighter and more definite. He left this task entirely to men who were much his inferiors in genius, open-mindedness and liveliness of observation, men who recognised their duty of giving, on the model of the ancients, firmness and regularity to the structure of English sentences. Yet to More belongs the honour of having provoked one of the best prose works of his time, his biography by his son-in-law, William Roper, which was written about 1535 but did not appear until 1626, in Paris. This is an admirable book from every point of view. Nothing could be simpler, clearer or more pathetic than its story of More's last moments, and it makes an impressive advance in clarity and construction on More's own writings.

(*b*) THE EDUCATIONISTS: ELYOT, CHEKE, WILSON, ASCHAM.—The men who were inspired by classical antiquity after More were educationists rather than imaginative writers. They have more in common with More's masters than with More himself. But they have over him the advantage that they wrote their best work in English and have not only a marginal place in English literature.

It is thus with Sir Thomas Elyot (1490-1546)[1] whose *Governor* appeared in 1531. This treatise on moral philosophy and education, written for those who would be called to govern their

[1] Edited by Croft (1889).

country, was founded on the Italian works of Pontano and Patrizzi and is full of the spirit of antiquity. It abounds with Greek and Latin reminiscences.

The influence of the civic morals of Rome is very evident in it, although Elyot was a convinced Christian. He adapts the manner of Plutarch to English history, for instance in the scene in which he shows the prince, afterwards Henry V., obeying the judge who sends him to prison, and the king congratulating himself on a fearless magistrate and a son submissive to justice. By this scene, of which the historical truth is most doubtful, Elyot inculcates the Roman respect for law. His prose is less of the people and less spontaneous than More's, but, on the other hand, more restrained and classical.

The humanism of a man brought up on antiquity is also the most salient characteristic of a book written against the seditious, the *Heart of Sedition, how grievous it is to a Commonwealth*,[1] by Sir John Cheke (1514-57), teacher of Greek at Cambridge. This good Hellenist, noted for the love of Greek which he spread around him, gave in 1549 forcible expression to English conservatism in his *Heart of Sedition*. It is directed against the Norfolk rebels who were led by the tanner Kett. Already we have that hostile picture of popular risings which recurs half a century later in Shakespeare's *Henry VI.* and *Coriolanus*. Cheke shows himself vigorous in argument, eloquent and occasionally homely and humorous. He has both the tone and the arguments which are heard again from the Shakespearean Menenius Agrippa.

Form was almost as important to Cheke as matter, and he made attempts to reform the English language. Sir Thomas Wilson (1525-81)[2] was concerned solely with style in his *Arte of Rhetorique*, published in 1553, in which this so-called English Quintilian recommends purity and simplicity of language. He reviews and derides all the verbal affectations of his time, and proscribes "inkhorn terms," "outlandish English," the barbarous legal language made up of deformed Anglo-Norman words, and the abuse of archaism by the "fine courtier" who "wil talke nothing but Chaucer."

[1] 1st edition 1549. Reprinted by G. Langbaine (Oxford, 1641) and in Holinshed's *Chronicle*.

[2] 1st edition 1553. Reprinted (Oxford, 1908).

These men are good masters, sensible and sure, fashioning both mind and style by their precepts and example. But their personalities are too restrained to have made a deep imprint on their prose. Roger Ascham (1515-68)[1] had qualities which threw him more into relief. He was the most popular of the educationists of his time, and the most pungent of the group of writers—Cheke, Wilson, Sir Thomas Smith and Watson—who about the middle of this century transferred from Oxford to Cambridge the honour of guiding England along the paths of the Renascence. Ascham was Cheke's friend, and in some degree his pupil, tutor to Elizabeth in his sixteenth year, a good Protestant, even tinged with Puritanism, yet prudent enough to be Mary Tudor's Latin secretary. He left behind him two books of which one was devoted to the physical education of the young and the other to their intellectual instruction.

The first of them, *Toxophilus* (1545), is intended to revive the love of archery for which Ascham felt an almost romantic passion. He even considers the bow to be a superior weapon to the cannon, and believes that the physical and moral health of his country is bound up with the practice of this obsolete sport.

His other book, *The Scholemaster*, was published in 1570, two years after his death, and contains his advice to masters on the teaching of Latin.

Ascham puts life into these treatises by his personal presentment of his ideas. He brings forward his own practice and experience, his memories, and interesting anecdotes related first-hand. His parentheses stimulate flagging attention. His preoccupation with Latinity does not debar him from a moral point of view. He admires the great writers of ancient Rome, but abominates, as papistical and corrupt, the Rome of his own time. He vigorously attacks the Italianism of the English nobility, especially the dangerous sojourns in the country of licence which rich young men of wealth and fashion were wont to make. He cares less for literary beauty and refinement than for solid and healthy education.

He also has the merit of having worked assiduously to advance the progress of the English language. He is aware,

[1] *Toxophilus*, 1st edition 1545; reprinted by Arber (1861) *The Schoolmaster*, 1st edition 1570; reprinted by Arber (1870), by Aldis Wright (1904), and in *Elizabethan Critical Essays* by Gregory Smith. Complete works, ed. Giles, 4 vols. (1864-5). German life by Dr. Katterfeld (1879)

he says in his preface to *Toxophilus*, that to write in Latin would have been "more honest for my name," but he decides to use English both to further "the pleasure or commoditie of the gentlemen and yeomen of Englande," and because everything has been written in English "in a maner so meanly, bothe for the matter and handelynge, that no man can do worse." Indisputably he helped to perfect the language by his use of it. His style is much laboured, penetrated with Latin turns of phrase and Latin elegancies. Numerous symmetrical, balanced, antithetical sentences, sometimes marked by alliteration, occur in his work, all that is best in the prose of the Euphuists without their eccentricity and false ornament. It is true that Ascham in his Romanised dress is a little stiff and hampered. But his faults are trifling as compared with the benefit prose derived from submitting to the discipline of the ancients, especially Cicero and Seneca, whose periodic style and nervous conciseness Ascham imitates by turns. The training which he imposed on himself and which he recommended for schoolboys had a salutary effect. He desired that a pupil should first translate a passage from Latin into English, and then, after a sufficient interval, be required to put his own English version back into Latin. By repeated use of this exercise Ascham himself acquired a relative facility of expression. The too heavy clothing of his thoughts finally became so pliable that the man, sincere, sensible and good-humoured, can be descried beneath it. He is one of the earliest writers of classical English prose.

These were the chief of the educationists, such of them as left a name behind them. The work which was being accomplished at this time cannot, however, be understood unless we add to their number all the nameless makers of the Renascence, all the unknown masters who were training their English pupils in the universities and the schools to admire and imitate the masterpieces of antiquity.

CHAPTER II

THE REFORMATION AND THE RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSIES FROM 1525 TO 1578

Humanism did not long remain without other admixture. Hardly had it affected literature when its influence was crossed and opposed by that of the religious Reformation. Most of the men of whom we have just spoken had to choose between the Pope and Luther or Calvin. The free development of their culture was interrupted and they were drawn into the religious struggle. In the year after that in which *Utopia* appeared Luther published his famous theses at Wittenberg. More's career was thereby transformed: the rest of his life was devoted to the defence of Catholic unity. Sir John Cheke died at forty-three years old of remorse for having abjured Protestantism under Mary Tudor. Ascham in his writings mingles Puritan ideas and pedagogic counsels. For others, controversy constituted all their life and the whole of their work.

Matter for controversy was from the outset mainly provided by the questions of the translation of the Bible into English and of the dissolution of religious houses, both destined to influence language and literature importantly.

1. *Tindale. Translation of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.*—It was the question of translating the Bible which brought Sir Thomas More and William Tindale into conflict.

William Tindale (1484-1536)[1] was the first to be inspired by Luther's example, and as early as 1522 he began to translate the New Testament into English. As he was prevented from

[1] Complete works with preface by Foxe, published 1573 See R. Demaus, *William Tyndall, a Biography* (1871).

pursuing this work in England, where the king was still at this date a determined defender of orthodoxy, he took refuge on the Continent, and finally had his translation printed at Cologne in 1525. In spite of the measures taken by Henry VIII., it was introduced into England, where the ground had been prepared by Wyclif and where there were some local survivals of the spirit of the Lollards. Tindale's version of the New Testament, which was founded both on Luther's translation and on editions of the Greek and Latin texts elucidated by the commentaries of Erasmus, was a basis for the famous Authorised Version of 1611.

Tindale, who had been a pioneer during the dangerous years in which the government of England was the champion of the papacy, maintained an active controversial defence of the Reformation. A good humanist, who had enjoyed a solid university education and knew the ancient and several modern languages, Tindale is a talented controversialist, especially in his treatise *The Obedience of a Christen man and how Christen rulers ought to governe,* which was printed in 1528. The advantage to the formation of vigorous, clear and swift-moving English prose which arose out of the reformers' need to speak to the people is apparent in his work. In order to justify the translation of the Bible into the vulgar tongue, he not only uses the arguments based on good sense which appealed to the many, but also defends English against the orthodox allegation that it was incapable of rendering the original text adequately. He lays down that, on the contrary, "the Greek tongue agreeth more with the English than with the Latin." He discovers a deep-rooted affinity between English and Hebrew, thus first perceiving a truth of which the application had presently to be extended to the very spirit of the two peoples. Like the humanists, he makes mock of the scholastics who applied Aristotelian logic to the interpretation of Scripture, and he is again in agreement with them in condemning the mediæval romances, the stories of Robin Hood and Bevis of Hampton, Hector and Troilus. But it is for reasons of morals that he rejects these tales, as licentious and ribald fables, not because he wishes another æsthetic ideal to be adopted. It is neither Homer nor Virgil which he would substitute for them, but only the Bible. From the first, he marks the agreement and the disagreement of humanism and the Reformation.

It was Thomas More, the most lettered and skilful of the

Catholics, who replied to Tindale, particularly on the question of translating the Bible. In this controversy More does not appear to advantage. He himself had recommended the translation of Scripture and he was obliged to contradict his own proposition. He liked, moreover, to write in Latin, and it was incumbent on him in this dispute to use English. His position was the difficult one of a quiet scholar who is compelled to take part in a public meeting and to speak against liberty. He equivocated, hinted that the Church was not absolutely opposed to the translation of the Bible, but only to unfaithful versions falsified by heresy. But his acuteness showed him from the beginning how unfitting it would be to deliver up Holy Writ to the interpretation of the ignorant man in the street, "suche blynd bayardis as wyll whan they rede the byble in englysch be more bysy than wyll bycum them." He foresaw the swarming of the sects and the eccentricities of the Independents, and proposed a middle way. Let each bishop decide to whom in his diocese a copy of the translation might be entrusted and from whom it should be withheld or withdrawn.

But the public demand had already gone beyond such partial toleration. Tindale was persecuted and put to death in the Low Countries in 1536. Yet Henry VIII. had broken with the papacy and had sent Thomas More to the scaffold in the previous year (1535). The Reformation was officially established in England, and Tindale's translation of the Bible, completed by Miles Coverdale in 1535,[1] was broadcast over the country. Four other translations were added to it during the next thirty years. The sacred texts of the Hebrews and the early Christians were in all men's hands, to be from this time a check or counterweight to the reading of Græco-Roman classics, and to introduce into prose the biblical dialect which was to tinge so much of English literature. What is noticeable in these successive translations, and what was preserved by the Authorised Version of 1611, is the traditional prose which was adopted, one removed from pedantry and triviality, simple and yet a little quaint, to which the beauty of the original texts and a certain magic of style, especially perceptible in Coverdale, clings in varying degree. This prose, thus created, had incomparable influence. It appealed to all classes, penetrated by way of religious feeling to all minds, and gave a certain beauty

[1] *Writings of Coverdale*, ed. Pearson (Cambridge, 1844).

to the speech even of the most ignorant and uncultivated, while it militated against the tendency to pedantry of the most learned. Its effects were especially conspicuous in the seventeenth century.

To the translation of the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, drawn up under Edward VI. in 1549,[1] was added. It is an anonymous compilation from the Latin missal, published under the direction of Archbishop Cranmer, and its cadences are such as to lift up the hearts of the faithful like poetry and to awaken the admiration of purely æsthetic critics. In this prayer-book Latin sonority has passed into a tongue which seemed hardly able to contain it. The mingling of the Saxon and French elements of the language is perfect. The disjointed and jarring character of pure Saxon has been eliminated. Everything connects, blends, harmonises, for instance in the General Confession: "Almighty and most merciful Father, We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts . . ."

These chosen sounds must be imagined rolling from the lips of a clergyman who is a skilled reader and who gives the rhythm to the congregation. It must be remembered that these sonorous and melodious phrases were repeated every Sunday in every church in England. Only thus can the impulse be understood which such a model could give to a language as yet indefinite and in search of paths.

2. *The Dissolution of Religious Houses.*—The other great change in the reign of Henry VIII. which reacted on letters was the suppression of the religious houses from 1535 to 1539.[2] To-day it is still difficult to say whether the measure was to the detriment or advantage of learning. There was an enormous destruction of books, deplored by the Protestants themselves, for instance by Bishop John Bale, one of the most determined enemies of the papacy. The Benedictine monasteries, which had been asylums for studious clerks, disappeared, and no like places of refuge arose in their stead. The numerous schools attached to many religious houses vanished also, and it was a long time before they were all replaced. Such of the Oxford and Cambridge colleges as were reserved for the religious became empty.

[1] J. Dowden, *The Workmanship of the Prayer-Book in Its Literary and Liturgical Aspect* (1899), and *Further Studies in the Prayer-Book* (1908).

[2] See *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. iii. chap. iii., and F. A. Gasquet, *Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries*, 2 vols. (1888).

The two great universities lost a considerable number of students. Higher education suffered: Greek, which had been brilliantly taught since the end of the fifteenth century, almost ceased, for a long period, to be studied. It was many years before the reformed foundations of schools and colleges compensated for the losses.

On the other hand, the end of the monasteries hastened the abandonment of scholastic philosophy which they had principally maintained, and this was favourable to a bolder spirit of intellectual enterprise. For the relations of the religious houses in England with sister houses on the Continent, relations established by the Reformers with their brothers in Germany, the Low Countries and Geneva were substituted. Finally, the books which escaped the plunderers did not remain secreted and immobilised on the shelves of monastic libraries, but were henceforth read and studied. The great ardour of antiquaries dates from this time. The earliest of them was John Leland (1506?-1552), who was commissioned in 1533 to examine all the ancient monuments of the country, especially the archives of cathedrals, colleges, priories and abbeys. He aspired to enrich the royal library with all the precious documents which had been delivered to the riflers, and was distressed to see young scholars sent from Germany to extract from them pages which went back with them to their own country, to rank there as national monuments. Leland spent six years travelling about England, exploring all the libraries, and he published a formidable list of the wealth he discovered. This was the limit of his capacity: his ambition to use his over-copious material was not realised. His *Itinerary* [1] served, however, to open a road, and at the end of the century it furnished Harrison [2] and Camden [3] and their like with material.

The same patriotic impulse is accountable for the many chronicles, Protestant in spirit, which appeared in the latter half of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth century. Edward Hall's *Chronicle*, published in 1548, traced the struggles of Lancaster and York and those of the first two Tudor reigns. Raphael

[1] *Itinerary*, first published by T. Hearne in 1710-12. Modern edition by L. T. Smith (1906-7).

[2] W. Harrison, *Description of England*, published in 1578 in Holinshed's *Chronicle*.

[3] W. Camden, *Britannia* (in Latin, 1586; English translation by P. Holland, *Britain*, 1610).

Holinshed's *Chronicles*, which go back to remote origins, were written in collaboration with others, published in 1578 and continued to 1586, and were for long the great repertory of national history, used by Spenser and Shakespeare, among others. John Stow, between 1561 and 1604, issued eleven editions of his *Summarie of English Cronicles*. John Speed's *Historie of Great Britaine* was published in 1611; and William Camden's history of the reign of Elizabeth was written in Latin in 1615 and translated into French, and from French to English in 1625.

None of these authors is either a writer of great talent or a veritable historian. Almost all of them collect evidence uncritically and filch from their predecessors. They have a mediocre talent for composition and cannot resist puerile anecdotes. But they are all equally animated by the desire to glorify the part played by England in the past as in the present.

3. *Latimer and John Foxe.*—Besides these almost impersonal productions, the Reformation provoked in the middle of the sixteenth century the very living work of a preacher, Hugh Latimer (1485-1555),[1] whose energy and good sense produced some of the most pungent pages of English prose of the period. At a time when religion wavered, when the country abruptly passed from one form of observance to another at the will of the governors, Latimer, in spite of one or two politic retractions, showed almost continuous zeal and courage in preaching as he believed, against Catholicism during Wolsey's ministry, against the bastard reform of Henry VIII., and against the laxity of the Protestant clergy under Edward VI. He ended at the stake, having refused, under Mary Tudor, to repudiate his heresy. His last words to Bishop Ridley, the companion of his martyrdom, are famous. "Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England as I trust shall never be put out."

These words have the accent of Thomas More, whom Latimer resembles in his homely, almost jocular manner of presenting his thought. He is like More, but has not his underlying refinement or his frequent moments of detached observation and reflection. Latimer's sermons are characterised by an absence

[1] G. E. Corrie, *Latimer's Sermons* (Parker Society, Cambridge, 1844), and *Sermons and Remains* (1845); R. Demaus, *Hugh Latimer, a Bibliography* (1881); R. W. and A. J. Carlyle, *Hugh Latimer* ("Leaders of Religion," 1900).

of theology and dogmatic discussion. Born of the people, a farmer's son, his mind had a popular cast. His subject was morals, and he illustrates it by countless allusions to the most familiar things, proverbial turns of speech, apologues and conceptions which were striking in their simplicity.

He believed in the power of sermons and preached especially against the clergy who did not preach. In his most celebrated sermon, that of 1549, "Of the Plough," he attacks the laziness of the Protestant clergy. His wit is broad and he scoffs at silent prelates with a comic use of alliteration: they are "pampering of their paunches," "mounching in their mangers." He relates, with much go, how he went to carry the gospel to a village grown unaccustomed to sermons, and found the church empty, because it was Robin Hood's day:

> It is no laughing matter, my friends, it is a weeping matter, a heavy matter, a heavy matter, under the pretence for gathering for Robin Hood, a traitor and a thief, to put out a preacher. . . . If the bishops had been preachers, there should never have been any such thing.

A famous passage has its natural place in his argument:

> I would ask you a strange question. Who is the most diligentest bishop and prelate in all England, that passeth all the rest in doing his office? . . . I will tell you. It is the devil. . . . He is never out of his diocese. . . . He is ever at his plough.

And the devil will bring back popery:

> Away with Bibles and up with beads! Away with the light of the gospel and up with the light of candles, yea at noon-days.

There are two pages on this theme, and their energy and redundancy are equally astonishing. The good Latimer's phrases have the very same turn as those of the stump-orators in London to-day. He keeps his audience breathless by his mixture of mother-wit and feeling and his sudden apostrophes. His great desire to be understood by the most ignorant makes him a pioneer among prose-writers. He simplifies and clarifies. By instinct and for his immediate purposes he accomplishes a work analogous to that of a pedagogue like Ascham. He often formulates his phrases briefly and balances them symmetrically. Yet, preoccupied as he is solely with religion, he is consistently careless of style. Although literate himself, he never gives a thought to literature, which has given but little thought to him.

Beside Latimer, another and very different writer may be ranged, the recorder of his last words on the stake and of the deeds and sayings of all the English martyrs who suffered for the Protestant faith and were the victims of Roman prelates "from the yeare of oure Lord a thousande" onwards. It may be claimed for John Foxe (1516-87) that he wrote the book of this century which, after the Bible, made most noise. His martyrology, *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perilous Dayes* (1563),[1] is inevitably the work not of an historian but of a partisan, but if the author be often credulous and partial, he is also sincere. Each martrydom is related with the simplicity of an official report. There are no flowers of style, but the wood-cuts in the original edition depict the tragic scenes, the instruments of torture, the stake. Nothing did more than this work to spread hatred of the papacy in England and to maintain the spirit of heroism which was to appear again in the days of the Puritans. The book was known outside England, served the Huguenots as a breviary, and gave d'Aubigné material for "Feux," one of the books of his *Tragiques*. It was first written by Foxe in Latin, but was translated by him into an unadorned English, without literary form, minute and dramatic when it relates interrogatories and tortures. To-day it astonishes by the fury which animates it, and which can still hold a reader's attention, enormous though the volume be and terrible its monotony.

4. *Scotland. Lyndsay, Buchanan and Knox.*—In Scotland the religious Reformation provoked a contemporary literary movement, evinced in the verses of Sir David Lyndsay, in the Latin works, both verse and prose, of George Buchanan and in the treatises of John Knox.

Sir David Lyndsay (1490-1555)[2] is the last of the line of the Scottish poets of the fifteenth century. By the form of his poetry he connects with the Middle Ages, but his ardent Protestantism distinguishes him from his predecessors. His work consists of a series of virulent satires which herald d'Aubigné's *Tragiques*. Hence there is a certain contradiction between his matter and his manner. His denunciations of Rome are contained by the traditional frames. He is a Jean de Meung who writes a *Roman de la Rose* after Luther. There is the same

[1] Ed. Cattley, 8 vols. (1836-41), and Pratt, 8 vols. (1877).
[2] Works edited by David Laing, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1879).



The Martyrdom of Ridley and Latimer, from an illustration to Foxe's "Book of Martyrs."

discrepancy in his life as in his writings, for this fervent democrat, this associate of John Knox, was also the companion of James V. from whom he received the high heraldic office of Lyon King at Arms.

Besides his *Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis,* of which we shall speak presently, he wrote *The Dreme* (1528), *The Complaynt* (1529), *The Testament of the Papyngo* (1530), *The Historie of ane nobill and vailyeand squyer, William Meldrum* (about 1550), and *The Monarchie, or Ane Dialog of the Miserable Estait of this World* (1552).

With prolix energy, without discrimination or beauty, but with a certain biting force, he denounces in these poems kings and prelates and their abuses and impostures. In his *Dreme* he descends into Hell, where he sees popes, emperors, kings, cardinals and archbishops chastised for the ambition which kept them from succouring and instructing the poor. His vision brings him back to Scotland, and there he meets a poor lean man, in rags, "with scrip on hip and pyikstaff in his hand," who is preparing to leave the country. It is John the Common Weal, who will not return until Scotland have a good king.

Lyndsay's satires were at first predominantly social, but with years they became more and more Protestant. His last and most considerable poem, *The Monarchie,* is a history of the most famous kingdoms of the earth, beginning with Daniel's vision of the four beasts which became the empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. The author's basis is one of Knox's sermons. His octosyllabic lines are so virulent as to recall Skelton, whose verses they surpass in regularity, but also in an inexorable prosaic quality. Lyndsay has nothing of the poet except metre, but his brutal satire strikes hard and multiplies blows without flinching. Often coarse, he owed his immunity from persecution to his licentiousness. For Lyndsay as for Rabelais, ribaldry was a passport for daring.

The celebrated humanist George Buchanan (1506-82)[1] wrote almost wholly in Latin, and he therefore has here no place except as a witness to the classical culture of a Scot, and to the alliance between the Renascence and the Reformation which he represented. He had close relations with France, where he studied

[1] Complete works published by the Scottish Text Society (1892) Study by P. Hume Brown (Edinburgh, 1890).

writer, but of a man of action who relates history in which he played a great rôle. His composition is not good, but his book is full of matter, of vigorous and picturesque passages in which humour and satire mingle. His stories of the murder by the men of the reformed religion of their persecutor, Cardinal Beaton, and of his own interviews with Queen Mary, have been found worthy to be compared with the more expressive pages of Saint-Simon. Knox, who wishes to appeal to England as to Scotland, avoids the dialectal peculiarities of his mother-tongue, and writes so as to be understood on both sides of the Tweed.

In all these men, and especially the Scots, there is something which presages a new era, social as well as religious, an age of democracy as well as of Protestantism. There are signs of a progress towards the triumph of the Presbyterians and the Puritans. In the meanwhile, the reformers' need to speak to the people frequently led them to use the vulgar tongue rather than Latin, and it is undeniable that they largely contributed to the advance of English prose, that medium which the humanists had too often disdained.

CHAPTER III

POETRY—ITALIANISM, WYATT AND SURREY—SACKVILLE AND THE "MIRROR FOR MAGISTRATES"—GASCOIGNE

Poetry[1] owes less to the Reformers. They kept aloof from it as secular and frivolous. It was humanism which provoked the renewal of poetry, and especially the influence of the Italian Renascence. The task involved was considerable, for verse had to be saved both from the languor which had overtaken it with such as Stephen Hawes and from the artistic disarray which such as Skelton had brought upon it. Everything had to be done over again. Under Henry VIII. two poets of the court undertook the task, and it was in Italy that they found both models and stimulus. These pioneers, whose labours were ended by premature death, were Wyatt and Surrey.

1. *Wyatt.*—Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-42),[2] who made sojourns in France and Italy, brought back from the latter country, in 1527, the admiration for lyrical poetry which he found there, and a desire to fashion English verse on the model of the Italians, or of the Ancients seen through an Italian medium.

His first object was to restore to English verse the nobility, grace and harmony it had lost. But as he groped after this ideal he showed how difficult was his enterprise. He seems at first to have perceived only the law of syllabism, and it is possible to find, doubtless in his earliest work, verses in which there is no discoverable regularity in the use of accents. So uncertain is his prosody, that we are driven to ask whether he were unaware of the iambic rhythm, or whether he pronounced such words as

[1] J. M. Burdan, *Early Tudor Poetry* (New York, 1920).

[2] *Tottel's Miscellany*, reprinted by Arber (1903). Wyatt's poetic works were edited by R. Bell in 1854, by Foxwell, 1914. See also, for Wyatt and Surrey, Edmond Bapst, *Deux gentilshommes et Poètes de la Cour de Henri VIII.* (Paris, 1891); L. Einstein, *The Italian Renaissance in England* (1892); W. C. Simmonds, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Poems* (Strasburg, 1889).

bannèr, suffèr, [dis]pleasùre, fearèth, as iambuses, throwing the accent on to the last syllable. His rhymes manifestly fall on unaccented syllables.

Gradually, however, he attained to comparative regularity. He went further than this. He borrowed from the Italians poetic forms which were unknown to his fellow-countrymen. Sometimes he uses Dante's *terza rima,* sometimes Serafino's *strambotti,* octaves rhyming as *abababcc,* and sometimes he imitates the Petrarchian sonnet. It was this last importation, effected in France at much the same time by Marot and Mellin de Saint-Gelais, which had by far the largest consequences. This was due not only to the beauty of the form, but also to the fact that the sonnet was then the principal vehicle for the direct expression of personal feeling, without recourse to fiction or allegory.

It was by the sonnet that lyricism again entered English poetry. Whether it were translated or imitated mattered little. It rendered the music of feeling or passion. It called forth the rare word, the metaphor, subtlety and condensation. Its very brevity necessitated artistic labour.

Wyatt wrote no memorable sonnets, but he blazed the track. His imitations of Petrarch brought bold and new images into English. He speaks of love who—

Into my face presseth with bold pretence,
And there campeth displaying his banner,

and tells that, upon rejection,

. . . to heart's forest he fleeth,
Leaving his enterprise with pain and cry.

This impassioned language was current and normal fifty years later, but before Wyatt it was entirely unknown.

Wyatt's sighs and supplications are Petrarchian. He is himself in other sonnets in which he pulls himself together and tells his mistress hard truths. His nature was frank and manly, like the proud portrait which Holbein made of him. The groans of humility suited him ill:

My heart I gave thee, not to do it pain,

he says; and again:

For he that doth believe bearing in hand,
Plougheth in the water and soweth in the sand.

He bids farewell not to his mistress only, but to love also:

> Farewell, Love, and all thy laws for ever;
> Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more:
> Senec and Plato call me from thy lore
> To perfect wealth, my wit for to endeavour.

And he bids love:

> With idle youth go use thy property.

He does indeed renounce love poems for satire. And his satires, imitated from Horace and Alamanni, are among his happiest innovations, reflecting his energetic and bold character. The courtier, withdrawn from the court, relates the vice and wretchedness he has seen. He mocks the gallants who advance their fortunes by marrying old rich widows. He tells, after Horace and Henryson, the fable of the fieldish mouse and the townish mouse, perhaps less happily than those predecessors, but with a proud accent to point his moral reflections.

The cavalier tone of his personal sonnets and his satires recurs in a few poems which are true songs, for instance, that beginning, "Madam, withouten many words," in which he calls upon his mistress to answer him yea or nay, and that last summons to his love which has kept its place in most anthologies:

> My lute, awake! perform the last
> Labour that thou and I shall waste;
> And end that I have now begun:
> And when this song is sung and past,
> My lute! be still for I have done.

2. *Surrey.*—Although he speaks of his vanished youth, Wyatt died young, at thirty-nine years old, so that he gave no measure of his powers. Still less did Surrey do so, for he was sent to the scaffold by Henry VIII. when he was only thirty.

The names of these poets are permanently linked in literary history. Born fourteen years after Wyatt, Surrey seems to have been the disciple of the older man whose name he celebrates in fine verses. The Earl of Surrey (1517-47)[1] was thus not obliged, like Wyatt, painfully to discover the rhythm of verse. Almost all the verses he left behind him are regular and harmonious.

[1] *Tottel's Miscellany*, op. cit. *The Poems of Surrey*, ed. Bell (1854); ed. Padelford (Washington, 1920; revised 1928).

His nature was less energetic than Wyatt's, but he was a better artist. The accomplishment of his short life is remarkable. His personality, that of a great gentleman and a poet, is like a first sketch for Sidney's.

Much more dominated than Wyatt by the Petrarchian convention, Surrey sang in sonnets his entirely imaginative love for Geraldine, or Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald. The elegiac tone is natural to him. His special note is that of love for nature, and with happy effect he mingles descriptions of nature with his love plaints.

But it is perhaps in some impersonal sonnets that his merit as an artist shows itself best. There may be a satirical allusion to a contemporary personage in his sonnet on Sardanapalus, but it should be read for its absolute value, its dignified swing, its structural force, and its effort to condense thought:

> Thassyrian king in peace, with foule desire,
> And filthy lustes, that staynd his regall hart,
> In war that should set princely hartes on fire:
> Did yeld, vanquished for want of marciall art.
> The dint of swordes from kisses seemed strange:
> And harder, than his ladies syde, his targe:
> From glutton feastes to souldiars fare, a change:
> His helmet, farre above a garlands charge.
> Who scarce the name of manhode did retayn,
> Drenched in slouth and womanish delight,
> Feble of spirte, impacient of pain:
> When he had lost his honor, and his right:
> Proud, time of wealth, in stormes appalled with drede,
> Murthered himself to shewe some manful dede.

A like grandeur distinguishes the sonnet which praises Wyatt for his translation of some of the Psalms of David. The humanist is betrayed in an allusion to Alexander preserving Homer's poems in an ark of gold, and is revealed elsewhere also, even in the love effusions, for instance in that curious lyrical piece, "When raging love," in which the poet consoles himself for his heartaches by thinking of the countless ills endured by the Greeks before they became masters of Ilion.

Nature and the poets of antiquity alternately console Surrey for his lover's griefs and his sadness when he is in prison. His most intimate poem is that in which, "prisoned in Windsor he recounteth his pleasure there passed":

Where I in lust and joy,
With a king's son, my childish years did pass,

the allusion being to his close friendship with the Duke of Richmond, natural son to Henry VIII. The elegy depicts his early joys—games, hunting, the "secret groves" and the "wild forest," above all the pleasures of friendship:

The secret thoughts, imparted with such trust,
The wanton talk.

No other poem gives in so short a compass a richer description of the luxurious and chivalrous life of a young nobleman:

The palme-play [1] where, despoiled for the game,
With dazed eyes oft we by gleams of love
Have missed the ball, and got sight of our dame,
To bait her eyes, which kept the leads above.

Remembering that nearly all Surrey's verses have a just and sure harmony, one cannot exaggerate the loss which English poetry suffered by his premature death. Less directly influenced by the Italians than Wyatt, he had a perfectly just sense of what befitted the poetry of his nation. For the sonnet on the Italian model cultivated by his friend—two quatrains followed by two tercets—he substituted the less elaborate and easier English form which Shakespeare afterwards adopted, three quatrains with different rhymes ending with a couplet. But his chief title to glory is that he introduced blank verse into English when, probably in the prison which he left only to go to his death, he translated the second and fourth books of the Æneid. He may have been induced to make this translation by the example of Cardinal Ippolito de Medici (1541). The innovation is in the pure spirit of the Renascence. It was to be attempted in all modern languages, with unequal results. How indeed was it possible not to blush for rhyme which none of the ancients authorised by their example, and not to try to dispense with it when translating their hexameters? Surrey's blank verse is simply the decasyllabic or heroic metre shorn of its rhymes. Of classical origin, it is learned verse, in no way popular. That Surrey was able immediately to give it almost all its distinctive characteristics is remarkable. It had to be saved from too close resemblance to rhymed

[1] Tennis.

decasyllabic verse; it was necessary that the sense of the words should not be complete at the end of each line, for this would have caused the lack of rhyme to be felt and produced wearisome monotony. To avoid this defect, Surrey decided to imitate Virgil in dividing lines, letting the sense run on from one line to another. But he did this too little, and without the sure touch and facility which his imitators acquired long after him. His line is stiff and lacks ductility. But it catches the epic tone, and shows itself much more apt to render Virgil's poetry than a rhymed line. This partial translation, which was little removed in date from that of the Scottish Douglas, proves that a revolution had been accomplished between 1520 and 1540. If Surrey's verses are far from attaining to the smooth Vergilian beauty, he has dignity and often strength. Thanks to him, English poetry acquired a magnificent instrument which, once perfected, became the metre of the drama and of the epic.

Wyatt and Surrey published nothing in their lifetimes. It was not until ten years after Surrey had been legally murdered that Richard Tottel, the printer, brought their verses out, together with those of some inferior authors, in the famous collection of songs and sonnets commonly known as *Tottel's Miscellany*. The influence of the two poets could not therefore be felt immediately, nor did it take effect as soon as the *Miscellany* appeared, numerous though the readers of this collection were. A whole generation passed before the lead of Wyatt and Surrey was followed. The very form of the sonnet was almost forgotten, and the name was used to designate short poems of very varying structure, often mere songs. These two poets must be admitted to have been much in advance of their time, English poetry to have been unripe for their ingenious essay. Yet they were in no way in revolt against the national tradition. Wyatt was a great admirer of Chaucer, had read the old poet assiduously. Nor did he reject the French models traditional in his country, for he made translations of Mellin de Saint-Gelais. But this Italianism did not take root in English poetry or bear fruit there until forty years after his death. Almost all the work of the French Pleiad was produced before England had made a step in advance. She did not even keep the position which these two young courtly writers had won for her.

3. *Sackville.*—Thomas Sackville (1536-1608)[1] the only poet after Wyatt and Surrey and before Spenser who left memorable verses behind him, reverted to the mediæval tradition. He was, none the less, a humanist who gave England her first classical tragedy. But chance willed that his only contribution to poetry, other than drama, was the *Induction,* which was followed by the *Complaint of the Duke of Buckingham,* written in 1563 for the *Mirror for Magistrates.* This *Mirror* was a series of stories concerning the misfortunes of the great figures in English history, and was written by several poets. Sackville conceived the idea of the collection, and his verses constitute its only merit.

The conception is in itself evidence of the patriotism which was impelling Englishmen to explore their annals. This enormous poem is founded on Lydgate's *Falls of Princes,* which was an adaptation of Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium,* previously imitated by Chaucer in his Monk's Tale. The authors of the *Mirror for Magistrates* cull their examples not from universal but solely from English history, but this effect of recrudescent patriotism cannot be called a literary innovation.

Sackville's *Induction,* written in the seven-line stanzas (*ababbcc*) beloved of Chaucer, takes us back to the vision and allegories of the *Roman de la Rose.* As a dark winter night is coming on, and the poet is mournfully reflecting on the miserable end of the great ones of the kingdom, and wishing he could describe them in order "to warn the rest whom fortune left alive," he sees approaching the sad shape of Sorrow, who offers to guide him to the realms of the dead, where he will hear their complaints. Led by her, he sees at the gate Remorse, Dread, Revenge, Misery, Care, Sleep, Old Age, Malady, Famine and War. He crosses the Acheron, passes near Cerberus, and enters the kingdom of Pluto, where, first of the fallen princes, the Duke of Buckingham comes to relate to him his woes.

It is difficult to imagine a gloomier series of stanzas. The darkness is uninterrupted, and it is this very excess of misery which constitutes the novelty of the poem. Never, since Dante's *Inferno,* had the Middle Ages conceived a vision so tensely and implacably sinister. A stronger brush was needed, a palette richer in sombre hues, a more solemn tone, than any which

[1] *The Mirror for Magistrates,* ed. J. Haslewood, 3 vols. (1815). Sackville's complete works were edited by R. W. Sackville-West (1859).

belonged to the trouvères. The best of those old verses, even Chaucer's, had a certain frailty. The language was too slight, the rhythm not sufficiently marked. But Sackville used an English which had contracted its grammar and dropped its terminations, and he re-established alternating accents more regularly than even Wyatt and Surrey. Just because he wrote at a time when the accentual rhythm of verse was in process of being reconstituted, he exaggerated his scansion with a powerfully monotonous effect, which he further emphasised by repeated alliterations.

The men of the Renascence who re-established rhythm were preoccupied by ancient metres. It was they who first used the words *iambus, trochee* and *spondee* to denote the combinations of accentuated and unaccentuated syllables in their lines. Chaucer gave no thought to anything of the sort, but was guided by ear alone, and escaped the more rigid laws observed by the earlier poets of the sixteenth century, or rather such few of them as wished to restore metre. Versification wavered for some time between anarchy and excessive regularity before it reached equilibrium. Sackville belongs to the small number faithful to scansion, and he hammers out his syllables with striking emphasis but monotonous persistence. He has, however, undeniable artistic sense, and he uses this very ding-dong to reinforce the energy of his gloomy pictures Spenser was inspired by him when he painted the most lugubrious scenes of the *Faerie Queene,* for instance the Cave of Despair, and even more when he wrote the melancholy stanzas of his *Complaints,* especially the *Ruins of Time* and the *Tears of the Muses.* Sackville really deserves to be called the connecting-link between Chaucer and Spenser. He lacked the variety of both these great poets perhaps because he soon left poetry for politics, ending as Lord Buckhurst and Lord High Treasurer. We have to judge his lyrical powers from a single lyric. His verses were isolated in a generation of which the poetic faculty was mediocre, hardly existent. He deserves the glory of having helped to renew English poetry.

4. *Various Poets. Gascoigne.*—Nothing could be emptier than this period. A bare mention suffices for the "tragedy" of *Jane Shore,* which was inserted by Thomas Churchyard in the *Mirror for Magistrates,* and was correctly versified but no more; for the *Eclogues* of Barnaby Googe (1563), poor in rhythm, Protestant rather than poetical; for the epitaphs, epigrams, songs

and sonnets in which George Turberville modestly imitated Wyatt and Surrey; and for Thomas Tusser's advice to farmers and their wives, swelling in bulk from 1557 to 1573, *Hundreth Good Pointes of Husbandrie, A Hundreth Good Poynts of Huswifery, Five Hundreth Points of Good Husbandrie.* Tusser's collection of practical counsels are completely prosaic, yet have some go and wit, and they are written in popular four-accented lines which seem to move at a gallop.

Verse continued for the most part to appear in collections or miscellanies, issued by a bookseller and induced by the success of *Tottel's Miscellany.* They were of diminishing interest. They included the *Paradyse of Daynty Devises* (1576), by Richard Edwards, choirmaster of the Chapel Royal, and the *Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1578), collected by Thomas Proctor.

Only one writer deserves less cursory notice, George Gascoigne (1525?-77),[1] who essayed to grope his way along all the new paths opened by the Renascence, although he made no great advance on any of them. A soldier and a poet, he was an amateur of poetry. Besides drama, he wrote in his youth love poems and slightly scandalous confessions, his *Hundreth Sundrie Flowers,* "bounde up in one small Poesie: Gathered partely by Translation in the fyne outlandish Gardins of Euripides, Ovid, Petrarke, Ariosto, and others, and partly by invention out of our owne fruitefull orchardes in England." These *Flowers* only appeared in 1573. Meanwhile the aging author had become pious and moral. It was then that he wrote the *Glass of Government,* in 1575, his satire in blank verse, the *Steel Glass,* in 1576, and the *Droome of Doomesday.* To these should be added the short metrical treatise called *Certayne Notes of Instruction concerning the making of verse or ryme in English.* Whatever form he chose, Gascoigne was almost always first in the field, and he is renowned for having written the first prose story taken from real life, the first prose comedy, the first tragedy translated from Italian, the first masque, the first regular satire and the first treatise on English prosody. But this versatility proves him prolific rather than artistic. He writes easily, without brilliancy

[1] Complete works ed. by W. C. Hazlitt, 2 vols. (1869-70), and by J. W. Cunliffe in 1907, and for the Cambridge University Press in 1910. See also the study on Gascoigne by F. E. Schelling (Boston, 1893).

or distinction. His blank verse is correct, but flat and dull; it reminds us of a hammer striking on a wooden anvil. He has, however, a curious mind, he is discreet, and there is go in his verses. His few innovations were so soon exceeded that hardly a trace is left of them. At one time a disciple of Italianism, he afterwards repudiated this fashion. His *Steel Glass,* which is his best-known work, compares the truthful metal mirror of older days with the too flattering glass, doubtless of Venetian crystal, used by the gallants and ladies of the poet's time. Here Gascoigne denounces the profanity and luxury of modern manners. He would revert to ancestral customs, and in his *Notes* he analogously advocates the reduction of the vocabulary to monosyllables, to the only words which were, in his opinion, of truly English origin. It is curious to notice how nationalism awoke in all these men, who at one time were humanists or Italianate, and with nationalism the desire to bar out foreign importations.

CHAPTER IV

THE THEATRE FROM 1520 TO 1578[1]

1. *Humanism in the Theatre.*—English dramatic writing produced no masterpiece in this period, yet felt its way along the most various paths, and acquired an experience without which the Elizabethan drama would have been impossible. It partook both of the past which had survived, and of the future for which it was preparing.

The miracle-plays were performed almost till the end, although, since the Protestants looked askance at them, they gradually lost ground, and the cycles of the different towns disappeared, one after another, as the Reformation advanced. In any case, these plays did no more than prolong their existence. They no longer changed: they merely persisted in the form which they had assumed in the fifteenth century. The interesting point is that they still had a large public, and that dramatic innovations did not supplant them, but were introduced side by side with them.

Moralities, on the other hand, did not only continue to be much appreciated, but were also modified and renewed in accordance with circumstances. Those produced until about 1520 were Christian and no more. They may be said to have had neither place nor date. But the moralities came to be impregnated with the spirit of the Renascence or the Reformation. Two distinct groups of them appeared, which voiced respectively humanist and Protestant tendencies.

Tedious though was the morality *Magnificence*,[2] written by John Skelton about 1516, it yet showed a new standpoint. It did not merely, like its predecessors, represent the struggle between Heaven and Hell. Skelton, who seems to have aimed at warning Henry VIII, against mad extravagance, does not deal with the great problem of Christianity, but enforces a particular moral

[1] A. W. Reed, *Early Tudor Drama* (London, 1926).
[2] Edited by A. Dyce, *Skelton's Works* (1843), and by R. L. Ramsay (1906).

lesson. His hero, Magnificence, is brought to ruin by a succession of bad counsellors, and would kill himself were he not saved by the intervention of Good Hope, Circumspection, Perseverance and others. This is the first specimen of a laicised morality.

In its two successors the spirit of the Renascence is much more clearly marked. They are inspired neither by the usual moral lesson nor by religious faith, but by the love of knowledge. Manifestly they were born in academic circles in which knowledge is the ideal goal and in which the devil is named Ignorance.

The morality of the *Four Elements*,[1] which was printed in 1519, and of which fragments are extant, is very curious. It is contemporary with More's *Utopia*. Like More, the author is under the influence of the tales of Amerigo Vespucci. He teaches geography, cosmography, almost all the sciences known to his time. The Messenger, who speaks the prologue, discourses gravely on science and deplores the lack of learned books in England and English. Only frivolous books, he says, are written in English, and only the rich man is esteemed wise in England. Yet true wisdom is in knowledge, in knowledge of God who can be known only by His works, and therefore in the study of nature. The play leaves theology on one side. The subject is the instruction of the child Humanity, son of "Natura Naturata." He is entrusted to Studious Desire, but his progress is interrupted by the temptations of Sensual Appetite, who takes him to the tavern. The child has interpreted ill the words of Nature, who bade him use his senses. Only at the end of the play does he again show a taste for knowledge.

Sensual Appetite here plays the part of clown, as does his friend Ignorance, who detests philosophers and astronomers and boasts of his own power, saying that he is mightier than the king of England or France, that he is the greatest lord alive, and has more than five hundred thousand servants in England. He addresses the audience directly:

> For all that they be now in this hall,
> They be the most part my servants all,
> And love principally
> Disports, as dancing, singing,
> Toys, trifling, laughing, jesting;
> For cunning they set not by.

[1] Edited by W. C. Hazlitt in Dodsley's *Old English Plays*, vol. i. (1874).

A geography lesson produces a burst of patriotism. Studious Desire instructs Humanity that the earth is round; Experience displays a globe, enumerates the countries she has visited, dwelling on America, and deplores that Spaniards, Portuguese and Frenchmen have gone farther than Englishmen:

> O, what a thing had be then,
> If that they that be Englishmen
> Might have been the first of all
> That there should have taken possession.

She would have wished all these countries to have been civilised and converted to religion by the English.

A like ardour to instruct fills John Redford's pedagogic morality, the *Play of Wyt and Science,*[1] which dates from the end of the reign of Henry VIII. Reason, after the manner of a highborn father, wishes to marry his daughter Science to Human Wit, the son of Nature. It matters not that Wit is neither well born nor rich:

> Wherefore, syns they both be so meet matches
> To love each other, strawe for the patches
> Of worldly mucke! syence hath inowghe
> For them both to lyve.

But Wit for long lacks wisdom. In his youthful eagerness to know, he imprudently attacks Tediousness and is saved only just in time by Honest Recreation. She, unfortunately, does not satisfy him, and he leaves her and falls asleep in the lap of Idleness. Without knowing it he has become a fool when, at last, he reaches the presence of Science, who repels him for an ignorant suitor. But in a mirror he sees himself as he is and is disgusted. After a term of chastisement and hard labour, he again attacks Tediousness, this time with a good sword, and slays him. Science, who has watched the encounter from the summit of Mount Parnassus, now accepts her destined spouse, first warning him:

> But if ye use me not well, then dowt me,
> For, sure, ye were better then wythout me!

This is an ingenious and well-arranged morality, which is pervaded by strong rationalist conviction. It resumes the spirit of the Renascence well, and bears witness to the appetite for knowledge which caused schools and colleges to be born in the land.

[1] In *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearian Drama,* ed. J. M. Manly, vol. i. (1897).

The comic element is supplied by an episode in which Ignorance is heard blundering through a lesson in the alphabet given him by his mother, Idleness. The mistress, who represents the old somnolent methods of teaching, is no less ridiculous than her idiot pupil.

2. *The Reformation on the Stage. Lyndsay. John Bale.*—Very early, the Reformation attempted to take possession of the morality and use it for its own ends. Passion, inevitably unjust and sometimes brutal, gave life to more than one Protestant morality-play. They appeared in the north and in the south. The first in date was written by the Scot Sir David Lyndsay whose reforming zeal we have already seen.

His *Satire of the Thrie Estaitis* [1] was played in 1540 at Linlithgow before the king of Scotland, the bishops and the people. It is as political as it is religious. The three estates are the nobles, the clergy and the merchants, and all three are pilloried together, censured for giving too much ear to Sensuality, Wantonness and Deceit. The grievances which John the Common Weal, the man of the people, has against them are just enough, and it is pleasant to see him obtain the needed reforms with the help of Good Counsel and Correction.

Lyndsay's special attack is against the Church. Dame Veritie, who desires access to the king, finds her way barred by the lords spiritual, scared at her advent. An abbot wishes to cast her into prison, and a parson recommends that she be put to death, under cover of the king's momentary subjection to Dame Sensuality. The same priest summons Veritie to declare by what right she is addicted to preaching. He threatens her with the stake, and when she refuses to retract, Flattery, a monk, exclaims:

> Quat buik is that, harlot, into thy hand?
> Out, walloway! this is the New Test'ment,
> In Englisch toung and printit in England:
> *Herisie, herisie! fire, fire! incontinent.*

In a comic interlude the social satire is dominant. Pauper recounts his misadventures. He used to keep his old father and mother by his labour and owned a mare and three cows. When his parents died the landlord took the mare as a heriot; the vicar seized the best cow at his father's, and the second best at his mother's, death. The third cow went the same way when his

[1] In David Laing's edition of Lyndsay's complete works (1879).

wife died of grief, when also the vicar's clerk bore off the uppermost clothes of the family. There is nothing left for Pauper to do but to beg. The parish-priest has refused him Easter communion because he no longer pays tithes. He has only one farthing in his pocket with which to plead for justice. A Pardoner arrives, boasting of his relics and insulting the New Testament, which sells to the injury of his trade. With his last farthing Pauper buys a thousand years' indulgence, but when he asks to see his purchase a fight ensues and the relics fall into the gutter.

These passages give an idea of the violence of the attack and of the life it imparted to the morality.

The Protestants of England were no less ferocious. Their most famous dramatic champion was Bishop John Bale (1495-1563), who even attempted to turn the fixed and traditional miracle-plays to Protestant uses. Under the name of tragedies, comedies and interludes, he wrote scenes in harmony with the reformed faith, taking them from sacred history and principally from the life of Christ. But he gave the chief of his efforts to morality-plays, combined with history which was sometimes contemporary, as in his *Proditiones Papistarum* and *Super utroque Regis Coniugio*. The most interesting of his dramatic essays is, however, his allegory *King Jehan* [1] in which he recasts history to his liking. He makes of the deplorable John a great king, hated and calumniated by the clergy. For John had been bold enough to rebel against Rome, and all his faults, crimes and cowardice are therefore wiped out. He is represented as a man misunderstood, a noble victim, the first Protestant. This play merits a particular place in the history of the theatre. It is the half-open chrysalis, the morality-play whence the historical drama is about to emerge. Real and allegorical characters are mingled in it. John is betrayed by Dissimulation and threatened by Sedition. Moreover, abstractions are changed in the course of the play into living beings. Sedition, for instance, becomes Cardinal Stephen Langton, Usurped Power the pope. This is a travesty of history and yet history, and, through the medium of another and Elizabethan work on the same reign, it was to leave its mark on Shakespeare's *King John*.

3. *Heywood's "Interludes." "Calisto and Melibœa."*—John

[1] Edited by J. M. Manly in *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearian Drama*, op. cit., vol. i.

Heywood's (1497?-1580)[1] interludes or farces, written under Henry VIII., cannot be called Catholic answers to Protestant attacks since they preceded the offensive of the Reformers. Two of them were printed as early as 1533. Heywood, a good Catholic and the friend of Thomas More, wrote in the mediæval tradition, in the spirit of the fabliaux which certainly did not spare churchmen. He was original in avoiding morality-plays and in having no purpose but to amuse. He has no notion of ecclesiastical or theological controversy. His *Interludes* are mere comic dialogues, scenes from fabliaux sometimes modelled on the French. But he is of his own nation almost the only representative of this school of dramatic writing. The four interludes which he certainly wrote are controversies in burlesque. In *Witty and Witless*, James and John discuss whether it be better to be a fool or a wise man: they are echoing the *Dyalogue du fol et du sage* performed at the court of Louis XII. In *Love*, an unloved lover and his unloving mistress seek, each of them, to prove himself the more miserable, while another couple, a lover beloved and a man who is neither loved nor a lover, dispute the right to be called the happier. In the *Play of Weather*, ten characters demand of Jupiter that he send them weather suited to their needs or desires, and the god finally decides that each of them shall be satisfied in turn. In the *Four P's*, four characters, a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Potycary and a Pedlar, discuss which of them shall tell the biggest lie. The pilgrim declares that in all his travels he has never seen a woman lose patience, and the others themselves allow that he has won the prize.

These plays are, it is seen, without plot, but Heywood puts life into his characters and expresses himself with a drollery which recalls Chaucer. There is a grotesque description of Hell equal to the Sompnour's in the prologue to his Tale. Good humour reigns everywhere. Yet these writings are hardly dramas. If, as is probable, Heywood also wrote the *Pardoner and the Friar* and *Johan Johan*, the story of a husband deceived by his wife, Tyb, and Sir Johan, the parish-priest, he came much nearer to farce in them. Their characters and incidents conform excellently to the old comic tradition, and their dramatisation could not be more

[1] *The Dramatic Writings of John Heywood* (Early English Drama Publications, 1905); A. W. Pollard, *John Heywood, a Critical Essay* (Gayley's "Representative Comedies," vol i., 1903).

vigorous. In these two pieces Heywood was inspired by French originals, *Farce nouvelle d'un pardonneur, d'un triacleur et d'une tavernière* and *Farce de Pernet qui va au vin.* Although he wrote under Henry VIII. he never even suggests the Renascence.

Not, that is, unless the comic monologue *Thersites*, played about 1537, may be ascribed to him on the evidence of style. Its subject and its allusions are loaded with classical reminiscences. The play is a free adaptation from the Latin of Ravisius Textor, or Jean Tixier de Ravisé, professor of rhetoric in Navarre College in Paris. Antiquity supplied the material for this farce, which had many analogies with the *Franc Archer de Bagnolet*, and which brought the braggart on to the English stage for the first time.

Another novelty isolated in the reign of Henry VIII. was the adaptation of the famous Spanish play *Celestina* which was printed in 1530 as *Calisto and Melibœa*.[1] The English playwright has kept only the first four of the sixteen acts of his original. He has changed the long crowded drama with its tragic conclusion to a romantic comedy having a moral and cheerful ending. The character of the procuress Celestina, the descendant of Dame Siriz and the prototype of Macette, is indeed the same in the English as in the original version, but before she throws Melibœa into the arms of Calisto, the girl's father intervenes to save her on the brink of the abyss. Thus the didactic instinct cuts short a romantic drama.

4. *Progress of the Theatre after 1550.*—There was no further change in the first half of the century, but from 1550 onwards innovations came thick and fast.

It is about the middle of the century that the formation of troops of professional players, in addition to the amateurs who performed in the miracle-plays, can be clearly traced. In more than one school and more than one college of the universities there were performances especially of classical pieces, but usually they were written by the masters and acted by the pupils. But the people of the provinces as well as those of the capital wished to be amused, and they were no longer satisfied with the miracle-plays and moralities. Interludes, otherwise farces, were in great demand and were provided by professional actors. These were

[1] Hazlitt's *Dodsley*, op. cit., vol. i. *Six Anonymous Plays* (Series I., ed. Farmer, 1905).

at first poor wretches, always under suspicion, who were harried by the authorities as rogues and vagabonds. Before they could be left in peace they had to obtain the patronage of a magnate, a baron at the least. There was no lack of such willing protectors who appreciated their services. The first company to obtain letters patent was Leicester's, in 1574, but it was not the first to stroll about the country. In London the players were at the mercy of the civic authorities, who made their life hard, less perhaps from Puritan prejudice, than because the highly popular dramatic performances constantly gave occasion for disorder, and by attracting a great concourse of spectators might spread the plague, during these years in which it was endemic.

Against the persecuting lord mayor the actors invoked the help of the queen and the magnates. Their chief plea was that they contributed to the queen's pleasure and had need of practice in order to be worthy to play before her. The Privy Council supported them against the City. They first played in London in the courtyards of certain inns. Then, to escape constant annoyance and prohibitions, some of them built, in 1576, their first theatre, outside the city but on its confines, on waste land in Shoreditch.

London meanwhile enjoyed more select performances. The Inns of Court were a home for the drama of classical tendencies, and a connecting-link between the stage of the universities and that of the popular theatres.

That the queen might be ensured a supply of worthy actors, the choristers or children of the Chapel Royal were trained to perform plays, both those specially written for them by the master of the Chapel Royal and others. These boys, both singers and actors, performed for the public as well as for the court, and were for some fifty years the dreaded competitors of adult and professional actors. Their example was followed by other London schools—St. Paul's, Westminster, and Merchant Taylor's—where the most gifted pupils were trained to act and were proud to contribute to the royal diversions. Nothing, not Puritan disapproval nor civic alarms, could stem the growing passion for the theatre which was felt by the whole nation—nobles, burghers and people.

(a) The Classical Influence. Comedy.—The first Eng-

time in Christ's College, Cambridge. This takes nothing from antiquity except its distribution in acts and its regular construction. Subject and characters are completely English and completely rustic. *Gammer Gurton's Needle*,[1] which was printed in 1575, was written by a Master of Arts of the university, reputedly by a certain William Stevenson. Gammer Gurton loses the needle with which she sews breeches for her servant Hodge. The good-for-nothing Diccon persuades her that it has been stolen by her neighbour, Mother Chatte, and quarrels and recriminations follow. The whole village is turned upside down. The parson intervenes, and Diccon takes advantage of the confusion to steal a ham. Finally Hodge utters a scream and the needle is found sticking in his breeches, and all is thereupon discovered. This story is not refined, but the dialogue has go; the rhymed verse, nimbler than Udall's, lends itself to comic effects; the realism is not adulterated by borrowings from antiquity; and there is an unsurpassable drinking-song, "Back and side go bare."

(b) The Classical Influence. Tragedy.—But farces, even when they were divided into acts in the ancient manner, could not lead to dramatic progress. They had had a place in the miracle-plays. The novelty was all in the isolation of the comic element. It was in tragedy that the national theatre and the theatre of antiquity came together most significantly.

Like the Italians and the French, the English were far more inspired by Seneca than by the Greek theatre.[2] He was a somewhat dangerous model, for his were oratorical tragedies, and it is a moot point whether they were written to be staged or to be declaimed. He used again the mythological themes of the Greeks, but used them, like a romantic, neither for their national sentiment nor because he believed in their legends, but for their brilliancy. He knew nothing of dramatic movement, and there is no action in his tragedies. His characters rarely voice real sentiments; their speeches abound with maxims; their language is emphatic and lyrical, full of choice metaphors which show great force of oratory and real subtlety in analysis. Long monologues alternate with passages made up of short questions and answers, each crowded into a single line. Seneca's political allusions are

[1] In Manly's *Specimens*, op. cit., vol. ii

[2] *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. v. chap iv , J. W. Cunliffe, *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy* (1893); F. L. Lucas, *Seneca and the Elizabethan Tragedy* (1922).

frequent and he often attacks tyrants. Most of these characteristics recur in the work of his imitators, but what they have taken from him by preference is certain of his expedients, sometimes his choruses and more often the phantom who has the duty of explanation. Above all, they have been impressed by the atrocity of his subjects, and have learnt from him to associate the idea of tragedy with that of crime, nearly always monstrous crime. *Agamemnon* and the horrors of the Atrides, *Œdipus Medea, Phædra*, and, above all, *Thyestes* and the horrible banquet of Atreus, led to tragedies of atrocious vengeance like *Titus Andronicus* and *The Duchess of Malfi*.

Five of Seneca's plays were separately translated and perhaps performed between 1559 and 1566, before the translation, published in 1581, of his *Ten Tragedies*. As early as 1562 Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton produced the tragedy of *Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex*,[1] which was imitated from him although it had an independence. Sackville was the author of the *Induction* to the *Mirror of Magistrates* and the best poet of his day, and both playwrights were lawyers and politicians. Their tragedy was given in one of the Inns of Court.

Seneca's influence is apparent in the uninterrupted seriousness of the play, in the sustained nobility of the style, in the almost abstract character of the scenes, where all the action falls to messengers and to confidants, male and female, in the abundant speechifying and also in the sanguinary plot. King Gorboduc abdicates in favour of his two sons, Ferrex and Porrex, who, like another Eteocles and Polynices, at once take up arms against each other. Ferrex is slain, and their mother, whose favourite son he is, kills her other son, Porrex, the slayer. The people are angered, rise in rebellion, and put father and mother to death. Anarchy, usurpation and the death of the usurper ensue.

In spite of these piled-up crimes, the play is cold and lacks movement and drama. Its authors were better fitted to express ideas than to put life in characters. They had a didactic aim, for they wished to depict the misfortunes of a kingdom to which the succession is uncertain—a constant preoccupation of Elizabethan politicians—and the horrors which accompany civil war and result from anarchy. Their tragedy would assuredly have interested

[1] In Manly's *Specimens*, op. cit., vol. ii.

Corneille had he known it. It is Seneca after the style of lawyers and members of parliament. The authors have a certain originality because of the didactic sense which, in spite of everything, connects *Gorboduc* with the moralities, and because of the patriotic feeling which made these young humanists choose their subject from the annals of Great Britain, as the subject of *King Lear*, with which it has analogies, was thence taken. They stand less apart from the national tradition than at first appears from their superficial resemblance to Seneca, that is, from their use of choruses, and their cult of gloomy effects combined with their rejection of the spectacular. But the symmetrical plan of their scenes—Ferrex and Porrex consulting their good and their bad adviser in turn, advisers who are almost as much abstractions as vice and virtue—betrays an artless simplification inspired by morality-plays rather than by Seneca. That the moral of the play may be the more distinct, and perhaps also that spectators unused to such heights of seriousness may be diverted, each act opens with a pantomime in which the lesson it conveys is illustrated.

This is therefore no mere academic tragedy. It is a work which stands first in a line of succession, the first unrelieved English tragedy and therefore the play which led to Kyd's *Spanish Tragedie*. It brought the idea of fatality on to the English stage. In spite of its great defects it established a high artistic level. Finally, it was the first play in which the blank verse formed under the influence of antiquity was used. The metre which Surrey had invented for his translation of Virgil served Sackville and Norton when they emulated Seneca. They handled it forcibly and with dignity, but were incapable of giving it the ductility necessary to the stage. Twenty-five years were to pass before their initiative was followed triumphantly. Their merit is that, though they did not reach success, they attempted.

(*c*) Various Influences.—*Gorboduc* was significant, but appeared in isolation. Round about this play there were many tentative efforts and importations from abroad, all of them pointing English drama along different paths. It has been possible to group several plays under the title "Prodigal Son Series." [1] This time the prototype was a work by a Neo-Latinist, the Dutchman Gnaphœus whose *Acolastus* had been translated by John Pals-

[1] See for this group *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol v. chap. v.

grave in 1540. He was imitated with great talent and with original additions in *Misogonus*, performed about 1560. The author, uncertainly identified as Thomas Richardes, wrote a strongly constructed and well-arranged play, enlivened by frankly comic scenes. The morality *Nice Wanton*, which appeared about 1560, connects with the same series and is a commentary on the adage "Spare the rod and spoil the child." In 1575 George Gascoigne produced his *Glass of Government* imitated both from *Acolastus* and from the *Rebels* of Macropodius.

George Gascoigne, ever in quest of novelty, is the best witness to the diversity of the influences operative at this time and of the sources whence plays derived. Besides the *Glass of Government* he wrote *The Supposes*, a prose translation of a comedy by Ariosto, and *Jocasta*, a tragedy which purports to be a translation from the *Phœnissæ* of Euripides, but is in truth a rearrangement of the Greek tragedy by the Italian Lodovico Dolce.

Italian influence is yet more apparent in a free adaptation by an unknown author of the Florentine Grazzini's *La Spiritata*, under the title *The Bugbears* (1561), in which a son obtains three thousand crowns from a miserly father by frightening him at night with noises attributed to ghosts, and is thus enabled to marry his mistress. Other plays inspired by Italian comedies also appeared, but only their names have been preserved.

(d) Formation of the National Drama.—Each of these classical, neo-classical and Italian influences had its part in blazing the track to the English national drama, which absorbed the most diverse elements. But there is a group of plays then acted which were not adaptations but truly English, and although they have weaknesses and an element of the ridiculous, they reveal the national drama as already almost a reality. They conform to that broad type which was finally adopted for drama and was followed by Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

Dramas of this type still partook of the morality-plays, at least in right of certain characters, but they tended more and more to stage the scenes of an episode of history or a romance, and they were wont to relieve tragedy or romance by scenes of broad comedy, more or less skilfully related to the principal plot, thus observing the great tradition of the miracle-plays.

The most striking of these plays are *Appius and Virginia* (1551?), *Damon and Pythias* (1564), *Horestes* (1567), *Gis-*

mond of Salerno (1567), *Cambyses* (1569) and *Promos and Cassandra* (1578).[1]

Three are obviously connected with the moralities. Like Bale's *King John,* they mingle abstractions and real characters. *Horestes* is entitled "A Newe Enterlude of Vice Conteyninge the Historye of Horestes" (Orestes). *Appius and Virginia,* of which the ridiculously emphatic language remained dear to Shakespeare's Pistol—"The furies fell of Limbo lake"—dramatises the well-known story of Virginius, who slew his daughter to save her from the wicked judge Appius. Appius is impelled by the vice called Haphazard, and Conscience and Justice appear to him. Homely and comic scenes alternate with tragedy. There is a curious mingling of all the earlier dramatic elements with a classic theme.

Cambyses is yet more significant. The author is usually identified as Thomas Preston, Master of Arts of King's College, Cambridge, a learned man who became master of Trinity Hall. The marked and yet artless bad taste of the style has thrown doubt on this authorship, yet the play shows signs of having been written by a humorist, for Herodotus is followed step by step, and there are many mythological reminiscences. The full title, as printed, is very characteristic, *A Lamentable Tragedie mixed full of plesant mirth containing the Life of Cambises, King of Persia, from the beginning of his kingdome unto his Death, his one good deede of execution, after that, many wicked deedes and tyrannous murders committed by and through him, and last of all, his odious death by Gods Justice appointed.*

Preston's method is that of the authors of the miracle-plays. He cuts up the story from Herodotus into scenes as they did the Scriptures. Not the whole of the story is in his play, but nearly all of it. He makes no attempt to weave a plot or by simplification to give unity to characters. Cambyses is represented in all the diversity and chronological incoherence of his actions. He begins well by ordering the execution of a prevaricating delegate, then, impulsive under the influence of wine, commits a series of atrocious crimes, almost all of them instantaneously, and passes immediately from the exaltation of love at first sight to pas-

[1] *Appius and Virginia* and *Damon and Pythias* are printed in Hazlitt's *Dodsley,* vol. iv.; *Promos and Cassandra* in Hazlitt, *Shakespeare's Library* (1875), vol. vi., *Cambyses* in Manly's *Specimens,* op. cit., vol. ii.

sionate and murderous fury against his new-made bride. The playwright, by refusing to make any selection among the deeds of his hero, has rendered him lifelike and complex enough, has shown his double physical and moral nature and given him a temperament. There is here a character which ought already to be called Shakespearean.

Cambyses is not always on the stage, but gives place to buffoons. We can discern, in the raw, the expedients of a playwright who, chiefly by varying his scenes, appeals to a heterogeneous public, caters for coarse as for other tastes in order to reach all his audience.

Allegorical mingle with historical characters, the better to bring out the moral, the most important abstraction being the vice called Ambidexter, whose part it is both to impel to evil and to ensure the punishment of the guilty. Ambidexter is a cynic who takes pleasure in discovering and encouraging human perversity, and revels in the sight of foolishness. In his chuckle we seem already to hear Iago, even more Gloucester (Richard III.) winning Queen Anne's heart by false protestations of love. This is the sardonic, diabolical and sharp-sighted sinner, bad all through, without a trace of conscience, snapping his fingers at prejudices, his philosophy a fundamental atheism.

The connection of the buffoonery with the tragedy is weak, yet exists and is already a little Shakespearean. Thus, Cambyses has just decided to make war on Egypt when three soldiers enter, rejoicing in the prospective expedition, counting on slaughter and plunder. The truth, as undoubted in the days of Cambyses as in the sixteenth century, is illustrated that war is not the exclusive concern of princes and generals, but is as much the common soldier's business as the king's. Similarly Shakespeare, when he deals with Falstaff's enrolments, shows the seamy side of the glorious profession of arms, adopting the point of view he keeps in all his popular scenes, whether English or Roman. It is the tradition of the miracle-plays combined with that of the morality-plays.

In *Cambyses* all the elucidation of the plot is spectacular. The murders are not recounted, as in *Gorboduc*, but the playwright carefully stages them in full. He reproduces the execution of Sisamnes who is beheaded and scalped—the artless stage directions stipulate for a false skin—his scalp being afterwards

pulled down over his ears. On the stage, Cambyses, to prove that he is not drunk, pierces the son of Praxaspe full in the heart with an arrow.

At the same time, this author carries pathos to the highest point. He puts into the mouth of the dying child of Praxaspe touching complaints which bring tears perforce. The scene recalls little Isaac ready to go to the stake in the mystery of *Abraham,* and anticipates the child Arthur in Shakespeare's *King John* seeking to move Hubert who has been ordered to burn out his eyes. But Preston reaches a yet higher degree of pathos. He sends a mother to mourn over the body of her son, and causes Cambyses to have the child's heart cut out that the father may know it was wounded in the very centre. After this, how could an audience be satisfied with only hearsay of butchery, messengers' tales?

To compensate for these episodes, Preston gives his public an open-air scene, a garden in which a fair lady and a lord stroll along the paths while the lord supplies the absence of scenery by describing the landscape and the flowers. Thus a breath of fresh air blows through the horrors of the melodrama.

This play reveals on examination all the characteristics of English drama of the great period It lacks only two things, genius and style, or rather, perhaps, only one, genius made manifest in style.

The awkwardness of Preston's writing was so complete and his bombast so ridiculous that his play, after a long term of popularity, became the laughing-stock of succeeding dramatists. Shakespeare amused himself by parodying it in Falstaff, who says, when he wishes to use fine language, "I will do it in King Cambyses' vein." Preston's rhetoric is in the highest degree both frantic and artless. Some of his metaphorical epithets have the most ludicrous effect, as when a character speaks of her "christall eyes," or the mother of little Praxaspe of her "velvet paps." Moreover, the playwright is so little at his ease with the fourteen-syllabled rhymed lines which he uses for tragic passages, that he mutilates grammar by the suppression of articles or by most astonishing inversions in the very places in which he aims at simple statements of fact.

Undoubtedly the great lack was of a metre fitted to drama, a ductile line which would leave freedom of movement to the play-

wright. Failing this, verse might have been relinquished for prose. In verse, the attempt made in *Gorboduc* had not yet been pursued, and prose had been tried only by Gascoigne in his *Supposes*. English drama made decided progress when a flexible metre had been adopted, more or less generally, and when prose was used with increasing frequency. As for the remaining and too prominent traces of the morality-play, it was not difficult to get rid of them. Even in *Cambyses* they appeared only in the names of characters. To eliminate them from that play it would have been necessary only to rebaptise a few supernumeraries, including Ambidexter, who were still called after abstractions. Richard Edwards, the author of *Damon and Pythias*, a far better if a possibly less significant play than *Cambyses*, contrived to do without abstractions altogether. He produced a tragi-comedy which, save for its versification, would not have seemed out of place had it appeared among a number of others of the great period. The same praise could be given to Whetstone, who wrote *Promos and Cassandra* in 1578, and from whom Shakespeare derived *Measure for Measure*, that gloomy comedy. Hitherto all had been experiment, but the advent of the works undeniably great was very near.

BOOK IV

THE FLOWERING OF THE RENASCENCE (1578-1625)

CHAPTER I

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GREAT PERIOD

1. *The Translations. Their Number and their Influence.*[1]—Although the great Renascence period, often somewhat inexactly called the Elizabethan age, came to be markedly original, its literature had its rise among a multitude of ancient and foreign influences. The rich soil was fertilised by a deep layer of translations. By 1579 many of the great works of ancient and modern times had been translated into English, almost all of them by 1603, the end of Elizabeth's reign. Some of these translations formed current reading and some became as popular as the best writings of English authors. There were certain of them which had an influence equal to that of the masterpieces of the age.

It is easier to notice the rare exceptions constituted by the few important works which were omitted than to enumerate the Greek and Latin authors done into English during the century. It is surprising that, at a time when Platonism awakened so much enthusiasm and inspired so many poets, Plato was, save for some fragments, neglected by the translators, and that, while the English theatre was enjoying an unmatched flowering season, the Greek tragedians were forgotten. Æschylus and Sophocles were not touched. Nor was Euripides, save for his *Phœnissæ*, of which Gascoigne, in 1559, produced a version entitled *Jocasta*, but one which he borrowed from the Italian Of the Latins, Plautus was overlooked except for *Menæchmi*, which was translated by Warner in 1595, although English comedy more than once followed in the footsteps of Plautus.

[1] *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol iv. chap. i. Many of these translations have been reprinted in the *Tudor Translations* Franck Schoell, *Etudes sur l'humanisme continental en Angleterre à la fin de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1926).

Among the moderns, no translation was made of Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, although this book was a veritable guide to many statesmen, and was commented on and, above all, attacked by many writers. Nor was there any translation of Rabelais—the first appeared in 1653—although he was known to several authors and imitated by them.

Of famous books, few besides these escaped. Practically all the others, of the past and of the present, were brought under contribution. It is true that all the translators were not able to use their originals directly, as was Philemon Holland, that good humanist and general translator of his century, who gave his country Livy (1600), Pliny the Elder (1601) and Suetonius (1609), not to mention Plutarch's moral writings (1603). But most used Italian and, in particular, French versions as intermediaries. Thomas North retranslated Plutarch's *Lives*, basing himself on Amyot's text (1579).[1] Thomas Nicolls, citizen of London, borrowed his Thucydides (1550) from the French of Claude de Seyssel, whose own translation of the Greek historian had been based on the Latin of Laurentius Valla. Adlington's version (1566) of the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius was taken from Guillaume Michel's translation, his *Ethics* of Aristotle (1547) from the Italian, and his *Politics* (1597) from Leroy's translation. Sometimes French was an intermediary even between Italian and English, as for Bandello, who reached England by way of Belleforest's version.

These indirect translations were often not the least remarkable for their literary merit and their influence. The instance of Thomas North is typical. He improved on Amyot's homely style, and by the quality of his idiomatic English produced a really national book. So lucid are his narratives, with such ease and precision does he tell his stories, that he does not suggest a translation. With a less sure and a more fanciful touch, but with a style which is full of go, John Florio, in 1603, gave Montaigne's *Essays*[2] to England. Like Plutarch's *Lives*, they became the everyday reading of many. Next to the Bible, they were the most widely known of foreign productions.

[1] In *Tudor Translations* (1895).
[2] In *Tudor Translations* (1892-3). Mme. Longworth Chambrun, *Giovanni Florio* (Paris, 1921).

The translations in verse are more unequal. Some are deplorable, like Stanyhurst's *Æneid* (1582), in which the impossible hexameter is used, together with a most baroque vocabulary, interspersed with contemporary slang and trivialities. This is an involuntary caricature of the most harmonious of poets. Phaer's *Æneid* (1562), while without such absurdities, lacks any positive merit, as do the translations of Golding of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid (1565-7), by Sir John Harington of *Orlando Furioso* (1591), and by Carew (1594) and Fairfax (1604) of *Gerusalemme Liberata.*

Du Bartas, who was admired as a Huguenot no less than as a poet, who was called the "treasure of humanism and jewel of theology," was happier than Ariosto or Tasso, for Sylvester, between 1590 and 1606, produced a vigorous translation of his *Semaine,* as bombastic and fantastic in style as the original, abounding in the composite epithets which the French soon rejected, but which found a home in English poetry, the English language being more adapted and propitious to their use than the French. This translation met with a considerable and a prolonged success.

But the masterpiece of verse translation was incontestably Chapman's Homer. Thanks to Chapman, the *Iliad* (1598-1609)[1] became a great Elizabethan poem, vehement, rich in verbal audacities. It was doubtless far removed from the serene Greek simplicity, but its energy and brilliancy were such as to impassion, two centuries later, the young Keats, who had no access to the original sources of Hellenism.

These translations from du Bartas and Homer really became part of the treasure of Elizabethan verse, as the versions of Plutarch and Montaigne belong to the great prose. The same might be said of the passages from Ovid and Lucan, reproduced by a poet like Marlowe, or of du Bellay's *Visions* and *Ruines de Rome,* as rendered by a master of rhythm like Spenser. Side by side with these patent and frankly avowed translations, dissimulated borrowing and plagiarising were frequent in this period in which literary copyright was disregarded. It will be seen that the sonneteers were the most considerable of the borrowers. English style and prosody were formed by these count-

[1] Reprinted in Morley's *Universal Library.*

less translations. They profited the great, the writers who were not robbers, but who found their language waxing rich and pliable by the schoolboy exercises to which it was subjected.

2. *Italianism.*—Among the foreign influences one was incontestably dominant, that of Italy.[1] Elizabethan literature, which came to be the expression of the national genius, had its birth in Italianism. The word may seem too narrow when the large number of French works then circulating in England are considered, and also the influence exercised by Spain, especially through the medium of the chivalrous romances—*Palmerin*, *Amadis* and Montemayor's famous *Diana* were all done into English by Anthony Munday before the end of the century—and through the picaresque romance *Lazarillo de Tormes*, which was translated in 1576. Since, however, France and Spain were themselves impregnated with Italian culture, the English were apt to find Italy even in what these other countries produced. And in these years Italian books, like the journey to Italy, were the great matter in England. As well as the works already cited, Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, translated by Thomas Hoby in 1561, should be mentioned, the book whence the Elizabethan gallants derived the principles of courtliness. Of more consequence to the development of drama and the novel in English were the tales of the *novellieri*, the short stories told so dramatically, vivaciously and skilfully by Boccaccio, Cinthio, Bandello, Straparola and their like. It is not easy to imagine how English drama would have been nourished without these comic or tragic and often licentious stories, these tales of pleasure, love, violence, blood and tears. No complete translation of them was made at this time, but many of them appeared scattered among successive collections, such as those of Fenton and Painter in 1567, Whetstone in 1582, Turberville in 1587.

The meeting between the English and the Italian spirit which had already enriched Chaucer's poetry brought a wealth of splendour to sixteenth-century England. The English character was, however, already at this time too definite and too insular merely to reflect a foreign country. The Reformation had not yet penetrated the nation deeply, nor absorbed it wholly, but it had made so distinct an impression that there was necessarily a

[1] Einstein, *The Italian Renaissance in England* (1892); M. A. Scott, *Elizabethan Translations from the Italian* (1916).

reaction against the prestige of the country which was the seat of Catholicism, and in which the Renascence had flowered with a sensual ardour reminiscent of paganism. By the second half of *the century* there were two opinions about Italianism; the new dangers to which Italy exposed her admirers were cited in opposition to her artistic attractions. We have seen that Roger Ascham, good humanist and good Protestant, gave up to this dispute half his *Scholemaster,* a book professedly about a method of translating Latin. It is true that the very violence of his attack throws into relief the fascination by which his contemporaries were held. He complained of the translations through which the products of Italian licence were steadily flowing into England, and his invective did not stem this stream. But Ascham's disapproval and that of the Puritans forced even the "devils incarnate," as they named those who returned from the peninsula, to depreciate the country which had at once dazzled and corrupted them. Usually the Italianate Englishmen criticised the books they themselves had imported, the morals which had corrupted theirs, the decadent civilisation which had given them a taste for forbidden pleasures. Though depraved, they felt that they still were not as the Italians. Italy, which excited the licentious imagination of the English, came little by little to be for them a land of unspeakable debauchery, the country of Machiavellism, crime and poison. It was their Utopia of irregularity. Thus both action and reaction must be discerned in the undeniable Italianism of the period. From being the stimulus and the model of England, Italy came to stand for the antithesis to the national character, which it defined by force of contrast The literature of England was enriched by an immense looting of Italian treasures, and the spoils carried back to the island were there exhibited, not only as marvellous works of art, but also as objects of reprobation.

3. *Patriotic Exaltation.*[1]—More than three-quarters of the sixteenth century passed before English literature did more than grope its way. Elizabeth, who was to name the great period, had been twenty years on the throne before a definitive step had been taken. By two successive advances, the one made in 1578, while Drake was sailing round the world, the other in 1589, on the

[1] See Jusserand, *Histoire Littéraire du Peuple anglais,* vol. ii. book v chaps i and ii.

morrow of the Armada, England caught up with her continental rivals, if indeed she did not outpace them.

About the year 1578 appeared John Lyly's *Euphues* and Spenser's *Shepheard's Calendar,* and all Sidney's work, in verse and prose, was written at about the same time, although it was not published until after his death. The impulse for this production was derived from patriotism. It sprang from England's growing consciousness of strength, her pride of prosperity, the spirit of adventure which animated her sons and caused them always to aspire to the first place, and her faith in her own destiny.

Everything, even religion, combined to stimulate and reinforce this patriotism. For very many, Protestantism, now triumphant, was no more than deliverance from foreign supremacy. It was summed up in the rejection of the papacy. It broke the bonds which had for centuries connected England with the Continent by subjecting her to Rome. If the English still conceived of union with Europe, they dreamt, with Sidney, of a confederation of all the Protestant states with England at their head, an association of the powers of good which should be ready to affront the powers of evil personified in Philip II., the Catholic monarch. The majority favoured an entirely insular Christianity, monopolising divinity for national ends. The Hebraic spirit was beginning to be substituted for the properly Christian spirit. The extreme formula of this overweening religious egoism was expressed by Lyly, who, in 1580, declared of God that he always had a tender care "of England, as of a new Israel, his chosen and peculier people," and who ended by announcing that "the living God is only the English God."

For most men, the exactions of God did not go beyond those of patriotism. Except for the still limited group to whom their faith was all in all, the Puritans who made it their first business to seek salvation, the people turned from such austere cares and gave themselves up to enjoying life. These were still the days of Merry England. The ardour of the first Reformers, their vehement preaching and the heroism of the martyrs under Mary Tudor, might give another impression, but in truth the country was still indifferent, if not sceptical, eager not for religion but for games and pleasure, ambitious of the free development which is

the very spirit of the Renascence. The intellectual paganism of humanism rested on the broad basis of an instinctive paganism scattered wide among the people.

The manner of the official Reformation in England excluded edification. Several times over, the English in the sixteenth century passed from one form of religion to another, as a herd *might change masters, without enthusiasm or revolt.* Kept in the beginning of the Reformation within the bounds of orthodoxy by Henry VIII., the champion of the papacy, they allowed him, on the occasion of his divorce, to implicate them in the schism, and then accepted a sort of Anglican Catholicism, with a new pope in a king who was the slayer of women and the most hypocritical and bigoted of bloodthirsty princes. Under Edward VI. they became real Protestants, and followed the services of their church in a Lutheranised prayer-book. Mary Tudor easily re-established Roman Catholicism among them, and might perhaps have reunited England to the papacy permanently, had not the prevalent indifferent and conciliatory spirit been alarmed by the burning of the Protestant martyrs, and had not the queen's marriage to Philip II. irritated and disquieted patriotism. When Elizabeth restored Protestantism she did it amid general rejoicing, but as pope she was political, not devout, well fitted to govern men who desired independence of Rome, but were in no wise inclined to profound conviction or to proselytism. Public opinion supported the queen when she restrained the Puritans as when she opposed the Catholics

4. *The High Conception of Poetry.*[1]—It was this tepid religious feeling which allowed literature to spring to vigorous life and the Renascence to flower. To the tardiness of the Reformation in closing its grip on the country England owes the glory of her drama, her most magnificent literary achievement, and also a large part of the glory of her other poetry under Elizabeth and James I.

This love of letters had its beginning in the patriotic pride which was impelling England to claim a pre-eminent place in every field of activity. *She was nearly a whole century behind-*

[1] *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. Gregory Smith, 2 vols. (1904); G Saintsbury, *History of Criticism*, vol. ii., book iv., chap v. (1902); J E. Spingarn, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance* (1899).

hand in maritime discovery and seafaring. With one bound she caught up with her rivals, Spain, Portugal and France, and insisted on outdistancing and ousting them. For the first time she was actuated by the spirit of imperialism. It gave birth to a swarm of tales of distant exploration and ensured their success, stories which do not exactly belong to literature, but were an element of literary animation and fertility. While Englishmen like Richard Eden, about the middle of the century, were translating and reproducing foreign stories of adventure, they were also becoming adventurers themselves and celebrating their own discoveries. In 1589 Richard Hakluyt published his great work *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation made by sea or over land . . . at any time within the compass of these 1500 yeares*, and in 1598 he issued a much augmented edition thereof. His task was continued by Samuel Purchas, who, in 1625, brought the chronicle up to date in *Hakluytus Posthumus*.

Literature was swept onwards by this spirit of conquest and self-glorification. England balanced her literary accounts and was ashamed to realise her poverty as compared to France, her indigence by the side of Italy, and her virtual destitution in comparison with antiquity. The latest in the field, she decided, arrogantly, to become the first. She had faith in her own genius and language, and also in her prosody if she could but reduce it to order. Hitherto she had been paralysed by timidity or by a certain languor, but she was now ready to be bold. She was prepared to venture on the various genres in which the ancients and the moderns had won distinction—pastorals, epics, comedies and tragedies, lyrics of every form, every kind of prose, romance, criticism, history and philosophy.

A magnet to draw her into each of these paths was the faith in the greatness of letters, and particularly of poetry, with which the Renascence had gradually inspired her. This faith made the poet the first of men. It was in 1579 that the Puritan Stephen Gosson, who had stigmatised poetry as a school of immorality, provoked Sidney's eloquent retort, his *Apologie for Poetrie*, written at the same time and in the same spirit as Spenser's lost treatise—the *English Poet*. Sidney recalls that to the Romans the poet was the *vates*, the diviner or prophet, and establishes his

superiority over the historian and the philosopher. "Of all Sciences," he says, ". . . is our Poet the Monarch." This gallant champion of jousts and battlefields esteemed that the poet deserved the laurel-wreath as much as the soldiers.

Spenser proclaims that heroes and famous poets are born together. He shows that civilisation and poetry advance side by side. In particular, he insists that poetry is "a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to be gotten by labour and learning, but adorned with both: and poured into the witte by a certain enthousiasmos and celestiall inspiration." It is true that this Platonic doctrine was common to the men of the Renascence, but it seems especially to have penetrated English poetry, which had almost its sole theoretical basis in a belief in the necessity of poetic enthusiasm. The Greek word recurs in English poetry in various vernacular forms, all of them proof of the assimilation of this article of faith. It is this enthusiasm which Shakespeare calls a "fine frenzy," which Drayton calls a "fine madness" when he is praising Marlowe or a "clear rage" when he is praising Shakespeare. None are poets who are not possessed of this demon. Drayton expects the poet to see "brave translunary things." The classical Daniel, a writer of pure and noble verse, is criticised by Spenser because—

> *Yet doth his trembling Muse but lowly flie,*
> *As daring not too rashly mount on high.*

And Drayton disdainfully considers Daniel's "manner better fitted to prose."

There was insistence that the candidate for poetic glory should have exaltation, and this quality therefore became a current one, genuine in the great, simulated in others. The object of their transports was beauty, to which Spenser addressed a magnificent hymn, and which Marlowe, in a famous passage and with poignant melancholy, declared to be beyond complete expression:

> *If all the pens that ever poets held*
> *Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,*
> *And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,*
> *Their minds, and muses on admirèd themes;*
> *If all the heavenly quintessence they still*
> *From their immortal flowers of poesy,*

Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive
The highest reaches of a human wit;
If these had made one poem's period,
And all combined in beauty's worthiness,
Yet should there hover in their restless heads
One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,
Which into words no virtue can digest.

The generation lived in this fever. Poetry was then neither the privilege of a caste nor the apanage of a few. It was widely disseminated, heated men's brains, and sometimes turned their heads, gave a lyrical turn to the whole of literature, beflowered and falsified the prose which was all poetic. To the poets whose names are known those many anonymous writers must be added whom a set of verses or a song, sometimes exquisite, proves to have had at least their hour of illumination. Everyone felt the breath that was passing—the passion for artifices of language, the perception that words hold something beyond their meaning, the pleasure in savouring words, the pleasure in the beautiful or at least in the fantastic. The courtier was surprised to find the man of the people as ingenious as himself. "The age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe," says Hamlet, as he listens to the gravedigger's punning. The awakening of mind and imagination was sudden, lively and general. It occurred first at court, but soon spread throughout the nation.

5. *The Spirit of Independence. The Rejection of Strict Rules.*—For all the extensive borrowing from abroad and avowed respect for ancient precedents and traditional rules of conduct, and in spite of the passing fashions which temporarily made a law of the strange or the eccentric, the general impression conveyed is one of frank and free boldness. A wide initiative was left to individuals. This is apparent if the language and versification, the common instruments of poets, be studied. There was no established grammar to fix and stereotype syntax. The first English grammar, Ben Jonson's, was written under James I., but it perished when the author's house was burnt, and appeared in fragments only after his death. There was more than one *Art of Poetry* compiled, but none of them had acknowledged authority.

In the matter of grammar, the critics of to-day are surprised to discover that the separation of the parts of speech was not

yet recognised. A dictum on Shakespearean grammar may be extended to the whole language:

> Any irregularities whatever, whether in the formation of words or in the combination of words into sentences, are allowable . . . almost any part of speech can be used as any other part of speech. An adverb can be used as a verb, . . . as a noun, . . . or as an adjective. . . . Any noun, adjective or neuter verb can be used as an active verb.[1]

The restriction was to the intelligible, and must be acknowledged not always to have been respected. On the other hand, writers were incessant creators, perpetual innovators. Words were not labelled and immobilised. There was something improvised and energetic in the mode of their use which became impossible in periods of fully constituted grammar.

Prosody also retained a mobility and pliability which had the happiest effect on true artists, although it misled the others to such licence that in the end verse relapsed to prose. It cannot be said that a fixed prosody existed at this time, that the value of each word had been established once for all and independently of its use. While in lyrics and solemn poetry words had their full and constant phonetic value, in dramatic verse they were increasingly governed by circumstances, and suffered contractions *and extensions entailed by the need of speed or emphasis.* One word might be taken to contain a varying number of syllables. Words were elastic, could shrink or expand. The astonishing blank verse of the theatre, especially of Shakespeare's plays, provides inexhaustible material for the study of these varying inflections which almost always are found to conform to one law, to follow nature, that is true passion or feeling.

Versification was not reduced to a single principle, but sometimes acknowledged the syllabic and sometimes the accentual law. Some verses are governed by no rule except that of the recurring *ictus*, or beats. They disregard both number of syllables and number of regular feet.

The great mass of the verse is at once syllabic and accentual. The heroic or decasyllabic line, either blank or rhymed, has precedence, and is found on analysis to contain, as a rule, five iambic feet. But it remains syllabic only in virtue of the elastic prosody. And it allows of very great diversity in the placing of accents and

[1] E. A. Abbott, *A Shakespearian Grammar*, p [illegible]. See also W. Fr[illegible], *Shakespeare-Grammatik*, 3rd edit. (Heidelberg, 1924).

the character of feet. It is a much varied, sometimes a very subtle, subject of study. The line differs, moreover, with different poets. Spenser's rhymed line is very different from Donne's; Marlowe's, Dekker's, Fletcher's and Massinger's blank verse are of widely diverse types; and such a metrical evolution can be discovered in the course of the poetical career of Shakespeare, considered by himself, that it has been possible to found on it the chronology of his dramatic works.

Analogous remarks apply to the combinations of rhymes and stanzas. The couplet or rhymed distich, which was to be adopted almost exclusively by the classical school, was already used frequently, but in its structure there was a freedom which subsequently disappeared. Its rhythm is varied because the place of the pause is shifted and because the sense is often continued from one line to another. The line is rarely self-contained, as it came to be later, and it keeps, if it does not enlarge, the freedom of movement which Chaucer had given it.

English poets were curious of every happening in continental literature, and were aware of the rules for the use of and feminine rhymes introduced by the Pleiad. In Fr principle of the alternation of the two kinds of rhyme w lished when Sidney and Spenser began to write. Sid enough awake to the law to observe it, with very happ in some of his songs. But no one in England seems to h the idea of making it absolute. Its establishment in Fra be regretted. When alternation became the rule, the that is the free use of the two kinds of rhyme, had to pressed, and alternation gradually became a mnem device. It did not leave to the poet the decision of whe would write a particular poem in masculine or in fe rhymes, or a duly proportioned mixture of both, nor did it him to fortify ideas or feeling by suitable rhyme. Where should have been, or remained, free, a police regulation was duced, and was accepted with surprising unanimity, not o songs, but also for the longest narratives. At one blow harmonious combinations were ruled out, for instance the of the sonnet, which was debarred from the *abc abc* dispos lines. English poetry did without such rules. In the c period it almost reached the point of abandoning the fe rhyme altogether, or relegating it to the domain of hum

verse. But Elizabethan poetry proscribed nothing, and used feminine rhymes abundantly, never, however, in obedience to a mechanical external law, but always to produce an effect of sweetness and melody. This small point shows the divergence of form between the poetry of France and of England at the Renascence. In consequence, it was more possible in England than in France to refine on the varieties of the stanzas for which France had supplied the model and to multiply their types.

CHAPTER II

THE PIONEERS: LYLY, SIDNEY AND SPENSER

The habitual distinction between prose and verse must be momentarily suspended in order to present together the three men who, about 1578, simultaneously, although with very unequal resources, were initiators of the literature dedicated to beauty. It is a distinction which loses importance at this time, because poetry penetrated everywhere. The prose of such romances as *Euphues* and *Arcadia* is entirely poetic. Only the drama really needs separate study. Lyly, except for his dramatic work, Sidney and Spenser are rightly presented side by side.

1. *John Lyly.*[1]—John Lyly (1554-1606) is the first in date of the writers who consciously and persistently used an artistic style and whose chief aspiration it manifestly was to say a thing well. It is even possible to ask if Lyly had any other clearly determined aim. But that his art was mainly artifice is a matter of little importance. He fulfilled the expectations of his fellow-countrymen so opportunely that his studied and strange way of writing set the fashion for a long period. For a good dozen years the "euphuistic" manner which he inaugurated reigned at court and spread thence through almost all literature.

The father of euphuism was born of a family of grammarians. He was the grandson of the William Lily who was the friend of Erasmus and More. After studying at Oxford, "where I tyred at a drie breast three yeares," he went to London, and there, with the help and patronage of Lord Burleigh, was able to live by his wits, at first in the guise of a moralist. In 1578, at the age of twenty-four, he published his famous *Euphues, or the Anatomy of Wit,* a book filled with wise lessons and bristling with attacks on irreligion and immorality. The hero, Euphues, or the Well-Endowed, is a young Athenian—a disguise for an Oxford man—noble, handsome, quick-witted and with a passion for

[1] *Euphues* reprinted by Arber (1868). *Complete Works of Lyly,* ed. Bond, 3 vols. (1902); A. Feuillerat, *John Lyly* (1910—a biographical and literary study).

travelling, but also presumptuous, apt to misuse his gifts, and too little disciplined by education. He goes to Naples—which is to say London, or rather the Italianate society of the capital—a city which is a proverb for licence. He is deaf to the counsels of a wise old man who enumerates to him the vices of the town, and enjoys himself very much there, frequenting parties and festivities and succumbing to the charms of a siren. He loses all his virtue, even to his loyalty in friendship, and forsakes his evil courses only after he has himself been the victim of the perversity which surrounds him.

When a friend introduces him to his mistress, Lucilla, he falls in love with her, supplants this friend in her favour, and is about to marry her when the fickle lady transfers her preference to a third and unworthy suitor. Euphues thereupon leaves Naples in disgust and returns to Athens, the city of philosophers, to dwell there among his books.

This brief story, which seems to reproduce an actual experience of the author, ends with moral and religious dissertations. In turn, Euphues preaches caution against every woman, the reform of education—he translates Plutarch's treatise—and belief in God.

The book had an undoubted success, proved by the four editions into which it ran in eighteen months, but it aroused anger in some quarters. Oxford complained of having been travestied, some smart thrusts had been made at ladies, and England protested against the rough handling she had received.

Of such things Lyly recked little. He was tenacious of his style but not of his ideas, and in 1580 he published *Euphues and his England*, in which he is prodigal of flattery to his country, its queen, its universities and, above all, its ladies. It is for them he writes. "*Euphues* had rather lye shut in a Ladyes casket than open in a Schollers studie." All the satire of the earlier book has gone. English beauty is declared unsurpassed. "There is no beautie but in England." Englishwomen are the most chaste of their sex, at whose altar Lyly sacrifices the women of Italy. Peace and religion reign under Elizabeth. "The living God is only the English God."

The slight narrative contained in this second book shows off the national virtues. The heroines are models of constancy and virtue. Iffida dies of grief because she has lost her Thyrs-

repels all the lovers who would console her. Camilla remains faithful to her Surius in spite of the suit of the inflammable Philautus. The story varies these perfections by witty and realistic scenes which faithfully portray London society, graceful analyses of feminine sentiment, and even an original character—Lady Flavia, the matron who has passed the age of passion, but likes to be surrounded by loving young couples, helping them while she mischievously reveals their manœuvres. Euphues is reduced in this book to a spectator whose business it is to express his admiration for England and the English.

Lyly, although he was preceded by the translators of the *novellieri*, Painter, Fenton and Pettie, has been justifiably called the first English novelist, that is the first storyteller who made it his business to paint society unromantically. But the matter of his *Euphues* did not, by a long way, delight his contemporaries as did the mannered graces of the style he affected.

There are in euphuism two distinct elements. There is first a principle of counterpoise and symmetry in sentences, a way of balancing clauses. The tendency in this direction was widespread in this century. Ascham, for instance, attained to symmetry by imitating Seneca's antitheses. Even the alliterations which Lyly used to emphasise balance had been employed by more than one of his predecessors, among others by Pettie in *A Petite Pallace of Pettie his Pleasure.* But Lyly does constantly and methodically what his forerunners did spasmodically. He makes a rule of the accidental. Moreover, he refines on their accomplishment. He doubles their simple alliterations, making his either direct or crossed (as in "The *h*ot *l*iver of a *h*eedlesse *l*over," or "Let my *r*ude *b*irth excuse my *b*old *r*equest"). A prose thus constituted is almost as regulated and measured as verse. Manifestly it suffers from excesses, and these are to-day more conspicuous than its other qualities. Yet the innovation it represented was of service at a time when there was need to cast the formless in a mould, to impart art to the inartistic.

The second element of euphuism is more peculiar to Lyly. He wished to decorate his style and knew not how to do it except by images and similes. It was necessary to render the abstract concrete. Unfortunately Lyly knew books well and nature very ill. He therefore had the idea of finding ornaments for his prose in ancient mythology and history and in fantastic notions of

natural history borrowed from Pliny the Elder through the medium of the bestiaries, herbaries and lapidaries dear to the Middle Ages. These compilations contained a fabulous fauna and flora of great decorative value to old tapestries, which seemed to Lyly marvellously adapted to illuminating his pages as he desired. He was not himself a believer in the unnatural nature he describes, but then his search was not for truth, only for decoration. It thus came about that he makes current use of these fantastic fictions as terms of comparison, adding to them yet more singular inventions of his own. In spite of their extravagance and complete unreality, they serve to prove his statements. The discord between form and substance is the more striking because he poses as a moralist. Yet what shocks us to-day then gave pure enjoyment. Lyly's ingenuity was admired, and his followers were pleased that they could imitate him without much difficulty, so plain was the recipe for this style of mechanical graces. Subsequently, it is true that the word euphuism lost its exact meaning and became synonymous with every kind of affectation and preciosity. The epithet was stretched to include the various artifices of Sidney, Shakespeare and Donne. Yet we have but to open *Euphues* and read a single page in order to discover the distinctive characteristics of this special disease of language. It recurred, in a slightly milder form, in Lyly's plays, where it was sometimes a virtue, giving point to retorts and balance to dialogue.

2. *Sir Philip Sidney* (1554-86).[1]—Lyly is a curiosity of literary history; Sidney and Spenser, his contemporaries, are great figures whose glory is still resplendent.

In his own generation Sidney successively enjoyed a personal and a literary prestige. Nothing he wrote was printed in his lifetime, all being published posthumously, and he first constituted the complete type of a gentleman of culture. He realised the chivalrous ideal retouched and perfected by the Renascence. In him the qualities of antique valour were combined with the new virtues for which humanism had created the need. He was not only the perfect knight, but also the lettered courtier, as Castiglione would have him be. But until some years after his

[1] Complete works ed. by A. Feuillerat (Cambridge English Classics, 3 vols, 1914 et seq.). Lives of Sidney by Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke (1652, modern ed. by Nowell Smith, 1907) and J. A. Symonds ("English Men of Letters," 1886).

death men did not learn that this Bayard had also been a Petrarch.

Of very high birth, a grandson of the Duke of Northumberland and nephew of the Earl of Leicester, brave, always ready to lay down his life, an accomplished horseman who had won distinction in the lists, sensitive on the point of honour and unfailing in extreme courtesy even to the humblest, Sidney had adapted the virtues of chivalry to the needs of a new age. He was a politician and a diplomat, who dreamt of grouping the Protestant nations against the pope and the king of Spain under the leadership of England. He had a passion for letters and art. He knew the ancients well, and was conversant with modern languages, French, Italian and Spanish. He was saturated with Mediterranean culture, with knowledge not only of literature but also of the plastic arts of Italy, in which country he had stayed.

All these gifts and accomplishments enriched a nature which was serious, intense and tinged with melancholy. Before Sidney could realise the type of a gentleman he had to control the violent impulses to which he was subject. Gallantry did not satisfy the deepest needs of a soul capable of a great passion.

(a) THE "ARCADIA."—He revealed in his *Apologie for Poetrie* his ideal of noble and classical beauty in writing. But his spontaneous taste did not always agree with his reason. Losing his way in his quest of beauty, he sought it long in ornament and preciosity and in the vagaries of the most capricious fancy. His *Arcadia* was written about 1580 to beguile a momentary exile from court and to please his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. It is a romance in which he gives rein to his fantastic invention and lets his pen trace the strangest arabesques. From the time it was published, in 1590, it inculcated in a whole generation a taste for literary jewellery, both real and false.

In this work Sidney mingles the pastoral and the chivalrous, a fusion already effected by Montemayor, the Spaniard, in *Diana*, and he brings together all the fantasies belonging to these two genres in stories hopelessly romantic.[1]

The whole is a pastoral, since its action takes place almost entirely in the ideal Arcadia, whither King Basileus has retired

[1] H. Genouy, *L'*Arcadia *de Sidney dans ses rapports avec l'*Arcadia *de Sannazaro et la* Diana *de Montemayor* (Montpellier, 1928).

and where he brings up his daughters as shepherdesses. The country is the most delightful in the world, its people the earth's happiest inhabitants. "Here a shepherd's boy piping, as though he should never be old; there a young shepherdess knitting, and withal singing, and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to work and her hands kept time to her voice-music."

But this is above all a story of love and chivalry. Arcadia figures only as a background, and the peace of the beautiful country is disturbed by bloodthirsty wars. Passion, which Basileus would have kept remote from his daughters, is introduced by two strange princes, Musidorus and Pyrocles, who, disguised respectively as a peasant and a woman, make their court to the most virtuous Pamela and to radiant Philoclea. The king is smitten with Pyrocles, whose woman's guise deceives him, and the queen, who discovers the fraud, is consumed with guilty love for the same prince. The redoubtable Amphialus is enamoured of Philoclea, and with the help of his mother, black-hearted Cecropia, he for long keeps the maidens captive and repels with the strength of his arms all attempts to set them free. But all Cecropia's sophistry fails before their purity of heart. Vainly she whispers cynical counsels to Philoclea, threatens her with death, has her whipped and her sister also, shows her a false vision of the beheading of Pamela that she may know her lot should she reject Amphialus. Love and virtue save the persecuted damsels. Finally, when Amphialus has been vanquished and slain, the beautiful loves of Musidorus and Pamela and of Pyrocles and Philoclea end in a double marriage.

This is the principal plot, but it is crossed by many episodes, more numerous in every one of Sidney's successive versions of his romance. The result has the air of a thing of pure caprice, the unbridled imaginings of a young man, a fiction staged outside time and in a land of chimera. Yet these extravagances, which would have delighted Don Quixote's heart and are in the tradition of the chivalrous romances, have a freshness because of Sidney's pleasure in telling a story and his sincere love for everything that is of valour and courtesy, because of his spontaneous passion for all beauty, whether of the body or of the soul. His fictions are a convenient frame for his ideas on morals and politics and his observations of life. For there is reason in this unreason, even realism in all this extravagance. Here and ther

the chivalrous and the sentimental are interrupted by the comic. The rustics Dametas, Miso and Mopsa play in the romance the part of clowns in the theatre. It is, however, by his attempts at character-study that Sidney especially marks a progress. He contrasts his virtuous with his vicious characters, and his painting of vice has considerable boldness, as when he depicts the perversity of Queen Gynecia, in love with Pyrocles, or the cruelty of the wretched and godless Cecropia, apt for every crime, as she inflicts horrible physical and moral tortures on her prisoners. Even more Sidney enriched the descriptive art of his time, particularly where the painting of love is concerned, by his search for detail in his portraits, by his analyses of expression and gestures, and by his observation of the correspondence between attitude and feeling.

The value of *Arcadia* is thus in its manner, in the style which clothes it, and in which merits and striking defects mingle very strangely. Artifice is as much present as in euphuism, but is of a quite different kind. Sidney refines upon the refined; he is not content with purely verbal conceits although he perpetrates a few of them—"Zelmane, exceedingly sorry for Pamela, but exceedingly exceeding that exceedingness in feare for Philoclea." Generally it is on thought or feeling that he refines, following his constant quest of the fair and the exquisite. A learned embroidery enriches the slightest details and heightens the most insignificant incidents, so that not a line of the story is left quite unadorned. But the decoration is not of the mechanical euphuistic kind, but is the result of the constantly active and constantly renewed play of fancy. Both the euphuists and Sidney aimed at imagery, but Lyly's images are like the flowers and birds on painted papers and printed stuffs. Sidney's images are woven into the very web of his fabric. They may be in doubtful taste, but they are creations.

It was essentially this quality which the French classicists were to stigmatise as preciosity and modern English critics as the pathetic fallacy. Sidney lends life, feeling and will to the inanimate and the abstract. Cool wine, when he writes of it, seems "to laugh for joy" as it nears a lady's lips, bloodstained armour to "blush that it had defended his master no better." Hail is blown against a face by "the pride of the wind." When women, disporting themselves in a river, beat the water with their hands,

"the water, making lines in his face, seemed to smile at such a beating, and with twenty bubbles not to be content to have the picture of their face in large upon him, but he would in each of these bubbles set forth the miniature of them." As these ladies came out of the water "with some drops [it] seemed to weep, that it should pass from their bodies."

Such prettinesses recur in Shakespeare, scattered throughout his work, whether voiced by little Prince Arthur or Miranda or Antony. They have sometimes a charming effect of gallantry. When Sidney's princesses dressed they "covered their dainty beauties with the glad clothes"; when they undressed, they "impoverished their clothes to enrich their bed." Thus Romeo will ask:

> What lady's that, which doth enrich the hand
> Of *yonder knight?*

The language of the most sugared courtesy is reached. The name a lady speaks is perfumed by her mouth. "Plangus whose name was sweetened by your breath" is Sidney's rendering of "Plangus whose name you have spoken."

Pearls, with and without flaws, might be endlessly fished from this sea of preciosity. There is a general agreement of good taste that they are many too many, and that they are heaped pell-mell, true and false together. Yet each of them implies a refining effort and a love of the beautiful which is interesting even when it goes astray among the fantastic and the excessive.

All is not, however, vain ornament. Sidney, working at language, often by bold and new combinations of words reaches close and vigorous expression. He is the first Englishman who was conscious of all the resources his language held for the impassioned style. His metaphors are sudden and elliptical. All the energy as well as the preciousness of the Shakespearean style exists in germ in his *Arcadia.* Of two brothers about to die of their wounds he says that each was "more dying in the other than in himself"; of Pamela that "she could no longer keep love from looking out through her eyes and going forth in her words." When a girl is in extremity of woe he speaks of "her eyes wherein sorrow swam." A lover pities his ears because "you shall never hear the music of music in her voice." Such passages, thrown into relief by a vigour of style hitherto unknown, are numerous.

But Sidney's real innovation was due, like Spenser's but independently of him, to senses sharpened by the contemplation of plastic works of art. In his romance, which he wrote when the *Faerie Queene* was no more than planned, he shows a sense of line and colour and of effects of light and shade hitherto unknown to the English. No one can appreciate him without reading the pages in which he describes Kalander's Italian garden and, above all, the works of art in the pavilion at the end of that garden. He must be watched as he takes pleasure in analysing and commenting on the intentions of the sculptor or the painter. Better still, he should be observed when he portrays his characters, describing them as though they figured on a master's canvas, for instance when he reproduces the studied and symbolical dress donned by Amphialus to visit Philoclea, his prisoner and the object of his unrequited love, and when he paints the attitude of that fair captive plunged in bitter thought in her solitary chamber. This sense of the externally picturesque is supported by an equal power of interpreting feeling which enables Sidney to attain to some charming new effects, both graceful and penetrating, as in the passage which shows the married bliss of Argalus and Parthenia, that ideally matched pair, before Argalus was summoned to the presence of King Basileus and the two were separated:

> The messenger made speed and found Argalus at a castle of his own, sitting in a parlour with the fair Parthenia, he reading in a book the stories of Hercules, she by him, as to hear him read: but while his eyes looked on the book, she looked on his eyes, and sometimes staying him with some pretty question, not so much to be resolved of the doubt, as to give him occasion to look upon her: a happy couple, he joying in her, she joying in herself, but in herself because she enjoyed him: both increased their riches by giving to each other.

To these merits Sidney sometimes joins that of eloquence as when he causes Queen Helen to give vent to her grief over the body of Amphialus, or the tortured Pamela to lift up a noble prayer to Heaven, or the same pure heroine to reply to Cecropia's cynical counsels.

The work is densely crowded, and with a medley of matt... On the whole the style deserves to be strongly condemned. I... the most poetic prose imaginable and therefore that most rem... from prose. Nor has it the advantage of Lyly's artificial st...

which at least provided a model of regular, symmetrical and well-balanced sentences. But Sidney let his pen run into sentences almost as interminable as those of Thomas More, weighed down with incidents and complicated by parentheses. It was especially the poets whom he influenced. A whole century of writers, including Shakespeare, the amorists of the Renascence and the so-called metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, were full of the refinements and strange subtleties of which Sidney had brought the dangerous and dazzling model from Italy and to which he had given the strength of his youthful ardour.

(b) "ASTROPHEL AND STELLA."[1]—Sidney needed the constraint of a restricted form to discipline his exuberant fancy, and needed also the magnet of a strong passion to draw him away from the complicated prettinesses of a style too agreeable to him. Passion came when Penelope Devereux, daughter of the Earl of Essex, to whom he might have been betrothed in her childhood, was the wife of Lord Rich and he became aware of his love for her. Bitter regret for lost happiness, the irresistible desire to possess his beloved, despair at her first coldness, the sweetness of feeling himself loved by her even when she fled him, the struggle in his truly virtuous heart between duty and passion, reason and desire: such is the theme of *Astrophel and Stella.* To express feelings which had some analogy with Petrarch's, Sidney had recourse to the sonnet, which had been neglected in England since Surrey's day. Within the narrow bounds of its fourteen lines he enshrined each movement of his heart, each incident of his love. [illegible]

[illegible] now only to his heart—"Look into thy heart and write." Doubtless he found in himself the feelings of lovers of all time, and often his real sincerity has a traditional turn and voice. Doubtless also he refined to a quintessence and was subtle in order to make his sonnets beautiful and worthy of his beloved. A sonneteer's truth cannot be simple and naked. In Sidney's verses there are many figures and metaphors; there are even antitheses and ingenious verbal elaboration. The closeness of the form often leads to obscurity. They cannot be cursorily read. A

[1] 1st ed. 1591. Modern ed. by A. W. Pollard (1591), and Flügel (Halle, 1889). Reprinted from the 1st ed. by Sir Sidney Lee in *Elizabethan Sonnets.*

whole allegory is sometimes condensed into a single line or even a single word. A thought is clothed in a figure which is often brilliant and rare, but which needs interpretation. In the sonnets there are constantly such energetic and new expressions as have already been noticed in the prose of *Arcadia*. "My truant wit," "Great with child to speak," "my sunburnt brain," "the blackest face of woe": all of these occur in the first sonnet.

Through the sonnets the figure of the high-born young man appears more and more clearly revealed. The quality of his soul gives them a particular ring. It is not the peculiarly spiritual exaltation of the mystical and religious Petrarch; nor the sensual ardour of a half-pagan artist like Ronsard, and his is not and could not be such frank and untroubled love as Spenser felt for his betrothed. His is a knightly passion, breathing an atmosphere of chivalry in a region whence the lists of tourneys are not hard to reach. We have glimpses, too, of the courtier and diplomat whom love snatches from his habitual thoughts. He is silent and melancholy at festivities and in the noble company he keeps; he is accused of pride because he seeks solitude, because he finds sympathy only in the moon's wan countenance, which seems to him to be the face of a lover scorned as he is, rejected like him.

Beautiful and poignant although the best sonnets of *Astrophel and Stella* are, they are surpassed in emotion by the songs and lyrical pieces which follow them in the same collection. The fourth song is a strange and plaintive serenade. The eighth is neither more nor less than the most passionate personal poem in all Elizabethan literature. The two lovers, who at last find themselves together in Maytime "in a grove most rich of shade," are in a delirium of grief and joy. Astrophel lifts up to Stella a love-cry in which amorous Nature, all about them, has part. In answer, she declares in a voice such "as not ears, but heart did touch," that her passion is equal to his, but begs him to guard the honour of both of them. Nowhere in literature is there a refusal which is more like yielding; nowhere a more generous bestowal of the heart such as makes the refusal of the body seem of no account. Nothing else in the lyricism of the English Renascence is at once so ardent, so true, so direct and so noble.

It will be seen that the author of *Arcadia* and *Astrophel* was both the champion of poetry and the first of the literary critics of his time, in merit as in date. It is important to remember, with

his verses, his eloquent defence of letters written in a beautiful prose, free of the affectations of his romance. Only thus can the loss be understood which English literature suffered when Philip Sidney fell heroically at Zutphen fight, at the age of thirty-two.

3. *Edmund Spenser.*[1]—Since Sidney's works did not appear until after his death, it was Spenser who first revealed poetic beauty to his generation. For the England of 1579, lagging behind the Continent, seeing the Renascence flower there while she remained almost sterile, the appearance of the *Shepheard's Calendar* inaugurated a period of self-confidence and vast hopes. Spenser was the master of the language whose "numbers flowe as fast as spring doth ryse." He seemed able to tune English verse, which had been so long rebellious, to the natural tones of his voice. For him the language ceased to be refractory.

From the beginning he had, like the French Pleiad, a patriotic literary programme. He was a translator and admirer of du Bellay, and he aspired to awakening the national muse from her languor and making her rival her most illustrious sisters. But, unlike the Pleiad, he founded his faith on admiration for the old poets of his country. Over and over again he calls Chaucer his revered master, "well of English undefyled." He says that when he himself began to write verse he modelled himself on Chaucer, and if their temperaments were too much contrasted to allow of other resemblance, at least he saturated himself with the old poet's language. It was his intention not to break with the [illegible]

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Biographies by R. W. Church ("English Men of Letters," 1879); A. B. Grosart, in 1st vol. of complete ed. of Spenser (1882-4); and in French by E. Legouis, *Edmund Spenser* (1923). Many detailed studies, especially in the United States.

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past, but to sink his roots deep into it. Hence he had, as compared with the poets of France, an originality which prepares us to understand the distinct character of his *Faerie Queene*.

(*a*) THE "SHEPHEARD'S CALENDAR."—It is true that he began by clothing with his archaism a poetic genre which is in the spirit of the Renascence. He was first archaic in a pastoral. In his *Shepheard's Calendar* his humanist's tastes combine with his love for the soil. He nationalises his eclogues by pungent words borrowed from the old poets of his country and from provincial vocabularies. Thus he makes free imitations of Theocritus, Bion and Virgil, especially of Mantuanus and of Marot, yet is never the mere reflection of an ancient or foreign writer.

The merits of the poem are properly those of style and are, in view of their date, astonishing. At last a poet had arrived who wrote neither carelessly nor laboriously. Quite unlike the "ragged rymers" of the period, "so pained and travailed in their remembrance, as it were a woman in childbirth, or as that same Pythia, when the traunce came upon her," Spenser has an unfailing and truly admirable ease. The quiet, sure flow of his sentences is sheer enjoyment. He was even archaic with a very precise artistic intention, seeking effects analogous to those of the painters who

> blaze and portrait not onlie the daintie lineaments of beautie, but also round about it to shadowe the rude thickets and craggy cliffs, that, by the baseness of such parts, more excellencie may accrew to the principall: for oftentimes we find ourselves, I know not how, singularly delighted with the shew of such naturall rudenesse, and take great pleasure in that disorderly order. Even so doo those rough and harsh tearmes enlumine, and make more clearly to appeare, the brightness of brave and glorious wordes. So oftentimes a discorde in musicke maketh a comely concordance.

This is the first note of conscious artistry sounded by an English poet, and the first time that so close a parallel was made between poetry, music and painting.

The impression of artistry is doubled when the versification of the collection is studied. Spenser's virtuosity at the outset of his career is surprising. Never yet had English poetry held, and never would it hold again, a poem in which the combinations of lines and rhymes were both as variously rich and as novel. In the *Calendar* there are as many as five different forms of stanzas in heroic or ten-syllabled lines. Elsewhere, in the songs, lines of

unequal length are combined in small, quite novel strophes. Spenser's song on Elizabeth (Eclogue IV.) has the light-hearted rhythm of the most graceful songs of the Pleiad. Certainly, matter is of less importance to him than form. To mourn the death of an unknown woman (*Dido*, Eclogue IX.), he translates Marot's fine elegy on Queen Louise of Savoy, but he transfigures the French poem, of which all the lines are of the same length, by inventing a learned and varied stanza, closed by a refrain which rings like a knell. He really gives wings to a touching plaint which, in the original, clings to the earth.

These songs are the gems of the *Calendar*. But his musicianly efforts went further. The metres of which we have just spoken constitute only half of those used in his eclogues. They form its regular, lofty portion, which is based on syllabism. Another portion is rudely designed, in popular metres which follow no law save that of the four accentual beats. In the last analysis this part of the poem derives, by way of Chaucer disfigured by the changes in the language, from the alliterative verse of the Anglo-Saxons.

To these stylistic and metrical innovations Spenser added the art of composition. The reader of to-day may think that the thread which connects his twelve eclogues and makes them into a single poem is thin and factitious. But Spenser was proud to have found, first among ancients or moderns, a way of forming eclogues into a harmonious whole, each of them corresponding to a month in the year and having a certain more or less apparent fitness to its appropriate atmosphere and season. Some of the shepherds change, but others reappear, especially Colin Clout, about whom they centre, in whom the poet paints himself, and who returns at regular intervals to utter his amorous sighs. The principles of unity and of variety are skilfully blended, the rude eclogues alternating with those loftier in tone. The alternation is more deliberate than that of dignified and homely scenes on the stage, but it obeys the same law. We may smile at the meticulous symmetry of the *Calendar* even in minute details. The excessive number of its calculated consonances and discords astonishes rather than charms us to-day, but these artistic exaggerations were greeted with transports of joy at a time when the still formless state of poetry made the demand for artistry urgent.

As compared with these external innovations, the matter of the eclogues is less important. They are found to include three principal themes, for which Spenser was unashamedly inspired by his predecessors—love, poetry and religion. He owes so much to his forerunners, especially Mantuan and Marot, that there is a temptation to overlook the personal and even autobiographical element which does nevertheless exist in his imitations.

The love which Colin Clout, Spenser's pastoral name for himself, bears to the scornful Rosalind, the poet's indignation when the muse is neglected and the singer reduced to misery, his Puritanic velleities, leading him to condemn the idle and proud prelates, the Anglican shepherds who had turned to secular pleasures—all this has relation to Spenser's cares of the moment and to the trend of public opinion.

With its many allusions, some of them still clear, many others plain to contemporaries, the *Shepheard's Calendar* united, at the time of its appearance, the interest of its matter to the charm of its manner. For the first time an English poet seemed to triumph over his European rivals, and in the very genre which was generally attractive in the sixteenth century, in pastoral poetry.[1] Spenser marked the first score in the game of parallelism between England and antiquity or modern Italy, which the English critics were to pursue, all ready to acclaim the victory of their national champions. The merit of the poem is great; its date and circumstances turned it into a triumph. From the moment of its publication Spenser was the acknowledged national poet.

(*b*) THE HYMNS. "MOTHER HUBBERD'S TALE."—At the same time his ambition grew. Like Virgil, he began with eclogues; like him he afterwards attempted the glorious enterprise of an epic. From pastoral he passed to chivalrous poetry. His *Calendar* was hardly finished when he was faced with a prospect of a courtier's life. He entered the household of the powerful Earl of Leicester, Elizabeth's favourite, and was admitted to the society of Philip Sidney, the earl's nephew. From this moment dates his first idea for *The Faerie Queene*, the great work of his life to which his other verses were no more than marginal scribblings.

[1] W. W. Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama . . . in England* (London, 1906), and H. Genouy, *L'Element Pastoral dans la poésie et dans la drame en Angleterre de 1579 a 1640* (Montpellier, 1928).

But even in 1580, before the beginning of that sojourn in Ireland which he felt as a weary exile and which lasted until the end of his life, he had completed some characteristic verses which did not appear until later, when they had been more or less retouched. The essence of his philosophy is expressed in his hymns to Love and Beauty, composed, he tells us, "in the greener times of my youth." With his sensuous artist's nature, enamoured of beauty and continually in love, he was the true Pamphilus his friend Harvey called him, yet was tormented by a need for truth, tossed between paganism and Christianity, the Renascence and the Reformation; and he thought to reconcile his senses and his conscience by following Plato, who identified supreme beauty with good. He found that this reconciliation of his dream had been effected, even better than in *Phædrus* and the *Banquet*, by the Italian Marsilio Ficino, who Christianised the spirit of Platonism. It was therefore with an ardent eloquence that he put into magnificent verse the sublime dreams of the Greek philosopher as interpreted by this modern discipline. Pure Love is the civiliser of the world which himself drew from chaos and ever since has maintained in harmony.

Spenser saw earthly beauty, and especially the beauty of woman, which inspires love, as the reflection and index of divine beauty, virtue rendered visible, the beam from on high lodged in a body and fashioning its fleshly habitation into a marvellous palace:

> Therefore where-ever that thou doest behold
> A comely corpse, with beautie faire endewed,
> Know this for certaine, that the same doth hold
> A beauteous soule, with faire conditions thewed;
> Fit to receive the seede of vertue strewed;
> For all that faire is, is by nature good;
> That is a sign to know the gentle blood.

This exquisite belief reconciles contraries, makes the pleasures of the eye into a school of perfection and love into a moral law. By virtue of this faith Spenser ennobled all his loves, gave his brush full leave to paint in fullest detail the bodily charms of his heroines, and saw all the stirrings of his own passion as impulses heavenwards. He became aware of the danger of this doctrine only towards the end of his life, when nearly all his verses had been written.

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With its many allusions, some of them still clear, many others plain to contemporaries, the *Shepheard's Calendar* united, at the time of its appearance, the interest of its matter to the charm of its manner. For the first time an English poet seemed to triumph over his European rivals, and in the very genre which was generally attractive in the sixteenth century, in pastoral poetry.[1] Spenser marked the first score in the game of parallelism between England and antiquity or modern Italy, which the English critics were to pursue, all ready to acclaim the victory of their national champions. The merit of the poem is great; its date and circumstances turned it into a triumph. From the moment of its publication Spenser was the acknowledged national poet.

(*b*) THE HYMNS. "MOTHER HUBBERD'S TALE."—At the same time his ambition grew. Like Virgil, he began with eclogues; like him he afterwards attempted the glorious enterprise of an epic. From pastoral he passed to chivalrous poetry. His *Calendar* was hardly finished when he was faced with a prospect of a courtier's life. He entered the household of the powerful Earl of Leicester, Elizabeth's favourite, and was admitted to the society of Philip Sidney, the earl's nephew. From this moment dates his first idea for *The Faerie Queene*, the great work of his life to which his other verses were no more than marginal scribblings.

[1] W. W. Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama . . . in England* (London, 1906), and H. Genouy, *L'Element Pastoral dans la poésie et dans la drame en Angleterre de 1579 a 1640* (Montpellier, 1928).

But even in 1580, before the beginning of that sojourn in Ireland which he felt as a weary exile and which lasted until the end of his life, he had completed some characteristic verses which did not appear until later, when they had been more or less retouched. The essence of his philosophy is expressed in his hymns to Love and Beauty, composed, he tells us, "in the greener times of my youth." With his sensuous artist's nature, enamoured of beauty and continually in love, he was the true Pamphilus his friend Harvey called him, yet was tormented by a need for truth, tossed between paganism and Christianity, the Renascence and the Reformation; and he thought to reconcile his senses and his conscience by following Plato, who identified supreme beauty with good. He found that this reconciliation of his dream had been effected, even better than in *Phædrus* and the *Banquet*, by the Italian Marsilio Ficino, who Christianised the spirit of Platonism. It was therefore with an ardent eloquence that he put into magnificent verse the sublime dreams of the Greek philosopher as interpreted by this modern discipline. Pure Love is the civiliser of the world which himself drew from chaos and ever since has maintained in harmony.

Spenser saw earthly beauty, and especially the beauty of woman, which inspires love, as the reflection and index of divine beauty, virtue rendered visible, the beam from on high lodged in a body and fashioning its fleshly habitation into a marvellous palace:

> Therefore where-ever that thou doest behold
> A comely corpse, with beautie faire endewed,
> Know this for certaine, that the same doth hold
> A beauteous soule, with faire conditions thewed;
> Fit to receive the seede of vertue strewed;
> For all that faire is, is by nature good;
> That is a sign to know the gentle blood.

This exquisite belief reconciles contraries, makes the pleasures of the eye into a school of perfection and love into a moral law. By virtue of this faith Spenser ennobled all his loves, gave his brush full leave to paint in fullest detail the bodily charms of his heroines, and saw all the stirrings of his own passion as impulses heavenwards. He became aware of the danger of this doctrine only towards the end of his life, when nearly all his verses had been written.

At about the same time as these exalted hymns, Spenser wrote a poem of quite another kind, a harsh satire in the form of a fable, to which he gave the name of *Mother Hubberd's Tale*. The reverse side of idealism is contempt for reality or discontent with it. Throughout his life Spenser was a morose judge of the society of his time, viewing it pessimistically. Dithyrambic eulogies of the incomparable Elizabeth are a screen for continuous denunciation of the mean intrigues of the court, the debased morals, the political corruption, the simony and inertia of the clergy, the decadence of the spirit of chivalry, and above all the neglect of letters and art. Spenser has a sort of artless faith in the golden age which he sees far behind him in an abolished past. The personal disappointments which this nervous and irritable poet suffered certainly contributed much to the blackness of his outlook. He was convinced that a poet has a right to one of the first places in a well-ordered society, that a sort of Prytaneum in which he would dwell remote from all material cares ought to exist for him, but he did not find great men and ministers disposed to satisfy his ambitions. His rancour gathered against Lord Burleigh, the great treasurer, the counsellor who more than any other had the queen's ear and who economically dispensed her favours and the powers she delegated.

Burleigh is hidden in the form of the Fox in the fable of the Ape and the Fox which constitutes *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, while the Ape is, at least sometimes, the Duke of Anjou, brother to Henry III. of France and a candidate for the queen's hand. The poem was written when Elizabeth seemed to incline to this Catholic suitor, who was hated in her kingdom as a foreigner and a member of the royal family responsible for the massacre of St. Bartholomew. The Ape and the Fox, two brazen adventurers, are shown passing through Elizabethan society, having luck now with the clergy, now with the court. They take advantage of a day when the Lion—that is the monarch, Queen Elizabeth—sleeps to steal his crown. The Ape thereupon becomes king and the Fox prime minister, and their shameless tyranny prospers until the Lion awakes. Except gaiety and humour, the fable has all the merits of its genre. It reveals the poet's powers of observation and his vigour. The metre, which is deliberately rude, suits the satirical intention, and its harshness has that easy amplitude which Spenser evinces in his properly poetic work.

(c) THE "COMPLAINTS."—The same condemnation of the age recurs copiously in the *Complaints, containing sundrie small Poems of the World's Vanitie,* published in 1591. *Mother Hubberd's Tale,* doubtless enlarged and retouched, figures here, but does not strike the dominant note of the collection, which is especially one of indignant or sorrowful eloquence. It is the "discours fatal des choses mondaines," which du Bellay recommended as essentially proper to lyricism. The total result is, to tell truth, lugubrious, in the spirit of the Middle Ages rather than of the Renascence, so monotonously sombre in colour as to recall the *Mirror for Magistrates.* The work is not wholly original. It includes translations—of Petrarch's *Visiones,* of du Bellay's *Visions* and *Ruines de Rome,* of the *Culex* attributed to Virgil. In all the original poems there is pessimism, founded on the disappearance of great souls and triumph of mean natures and a reference must be understood both to the death of Sidney and Leicester, followed in 1590 by that of Walsingham, the Mæcenas of the century, and to the growing power of Burleigh. This is the theme of the *Ruines of Time,* the first poem of the *Complaints,* a long lamentation over the ruins of Verulam, cradle of the race of Dudley (Leicester). It is the subject also of the *Teares of the Muses,* in which each of the nine sisters sighs out her despair in turn and declares barbarism to have returned and knowledge to be scorned not only by the people, but also by the great, who should be its patrons. In this degenerate age the Muses find nothing to praise. They have no lofty subjects; Clio has nothing to write. Singers have not quite vanished from the land, but the rare favours are granted to parasites and sycophants. Luxury reigns, and the love which is sung with success is that which is impure. The singers of chaste and divine love must give place to vile rhymesters with "dunghill thoughts." As the favour of the great is withdrawn from the Muses, they are adopted by the vulgar, who debase them to their own level. Melpomene and Thalia are miserable, especially Thalia, who complains that, where once there were the delights of comedy,

In stead thereof scoffing Scurrilitie,
And scornful Follie with Contempt is crept,
Rolling in rymes of shameless ribaudrie
Without regard, or due decorum kept.

Here it becomes apparent that Spenser was out of tune with

the spirit of his time, especially as it found its strongest and liveliest expression in the drama, which was embarking on its astonishing career at the moment when the *Complaints* were published. After nearly ten years Spenser repeated Sidney's attacks, and they had come to lack their earlier justification. Spenser's ideal of nobility was offended and scandalised by the troubled, tumultuous life of the popular theatre.

The *Complaints* include, however, a more personal poem, an elegy less strained in its vehemence which begins in a mocking spirit. This is the graceful fable called *Muiopotmos, or the Fate of the Butterflie.* The poet uses it to express his voluptuous nature; then shows his brilliant butterfly caught in the web of the horrible spider, fatal enemy to all poetry and love in this world. Intoxicated with beauty, Clarion, the butterfly, flies into the garden of Nature to make his booty of delights. Light and joyous, he flits confidently from flower to flower, ignorant of malice and perfidy until the day when he becomes the victim of Aragnoll, who sucks his blood. Spenser wrote nothing livelier or more charming than this mock-heroic fable, and its plaint, more intimate and sincere than the sombre rhetoric of the poems which accompany it, moves our pity more than they.

(*d*) "ASTROPHEL." "COLIN CLOUTS COME HOME AGAINE."—Spenser wrote other elegies as well as the *Complaints:* his *Daphnaïda,* which voices, in a fiction imitated from Chaucer's *Boke of the Duchesse,* Arthur Gorges' mourning over the death of his wife, and especially his *Astrophel,* an allegory of the life and death of Sir Philip Sidney. In both these poems he resorts to the pastoral form in order to decorate and transform reality. Sidney, the valiant knight, becomes a shepherd of Arcady wounded to death by an enraged boar, and the hero of Zutphen cannot be said to gain by the change. Spenser, in spite of years and the alteration of public taste, is still faithful to his first and bucolic love. In *The Teares of the Muses* he shows Euterpe weeping over her deserted groves, but he himself still frequented them.

Another pastoral, *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe,* was the vehicle of his impressions of a visit to London in 1589-90, during which he published the three first books of the *Faerie Queene* and experienced the recognition and smiles of his sovereign, but also vexation, disillusionment and neglect. *Colin Clouts Come Home*

Againe is the most autobiographical of his poems, and his contribution to the pastoral genre which has most novelty. Colin Clout (Spenser), the shepherd, is visited by the Shepherd of the Ocean (Sir Walter Raleigh), who is charmed by his music and takes him to the court of Cynthia (Elizabeth), the great shepherdess. The meeting with the brilliant adventurer who, on the morrow of the Armada, pointed England towards her future on the sea and in her colonies brings the spirit of the new age into Spenser's poetry. When the Shepherd of the Ocean is thus introduced into an eclogue, it is as though an eagre of the tide unexpectedly flooded the meadows on which flocks had pastured for centuries. Spenser takes pleasure in describing how the herdsmen are scared by their visitor, who "came far from the main-sea deepe." In their stupefaction, their landsmen's fear before tales of the unknown waters, the sudden transformation of a mainly agricultural into a maritime country, one destined to be mistress of the seas, is figured.

Colin's stay at the court is no less interesting: we are shown his adoration of the queen, his marvelling at the songsters and the ladies who form Elizabeth's magnificent train, his joy at the enthusiastic hearing given to his rustic lays, and then his sudden awakening from his fair dream, his discovery of the base intrigues, jealousies, false promises and debauchery hidden beneath the seeming decorum, and of the malignity masked by courtesy. Angered and disgusted, Colin escapes and returns to his humble and simple shepherd's life and its constant and virtuous loves.

(*e*) The "Amoretti" and the "Epithalamion."—Soon after his return to Ireland, in 1591, Spenser began his suit to Elizabeth Boyle, to whom are addressed the *Amoretti* sonnets and the superb *Epithalamion* which concludes them. These poems have a place to themselves among the works of Spenser. Only in them does he voice his feelings without recourse to allegory. The innovation illustrates the importance of the part played by the sonnet in this period. It was almost the sole medium of direct effusion and personal expression. Spenser, whose eyes were on the past, began by overlooking the sonnet. Sidney, with the glorious *Astrophel and Stella* series, was the first to use it, long after Wyatt and Surrey, and much more powerfully than they. It was the publication of *Astrophel and Stella* in 1591 which

really gave rise to the passion for the sonnet, and which prepared the way for the *Amoretti* and several other collections. In the first rank of the works of the English Renascence, Spenser's sonnets come between those of Sidney and Shakespeare, from which they are distinct in form as in sentiment. His three quatrains, linked by an artistic arrangement of rhymes and followed by a couplet, make a harmonious whole (*abab, bcbc, cdcd, ee*). Exceptionally at this time, these sonnets depart from Petrarch's precedent and are those of a betrothed lover. There is not here the unquiet of Sidney in love with Lord Rich's wife, or of Shakespeare whose mistress deceived him with his friend. Spenser's sonnets are unique by their purity. They tell a story of love without sin or remorse, its varying fortunes, the lover's sighs until the day on which he is accepted, and his final joy. In default of ardent passion, the *Amoretti* have the charm of a harmonious and pure atmosphere; they are bathed by a white light. They show better than anything else the quality in Spenser which Coleridge excellentl named "maidenliness," his love of the virginal in woman.

Undoubtedly they have much that is borrowed or reminiscent. The sighs which Spenser breathes often echo those of Petrarch and the Petrarchians; his indifferent and scornful fair, whose pity he long implores in vain, recalls the cruel ladies of tradition. But the poet's distinctive voice is heard in sonnets like the sixth, in which he rejoices in the maiden's prolonged resistance, as the index of her untouched heart never troubled by desire, and as the pledge of a chaste ardour which, once lit, will not be quenched. The same voice sounds in the sixty-seventh sonnet, though imitative of Tasso, in which he tells, in charmed surprise, of the sudden moving of this virginal heart which has been so timid and which, at the very moment when he deems it lost for ever, gives itself unreservedly to him and is happy to be captured.

The chastity of these sonnets is neither shyness nor reticence. In many of them the poet extols his mistress's beauty with a great sensual wealth of detail and colour, and does not conceal the ardour of his desires, even while he restrains their impatience (Sonnet 83).

Charming though they be, the *Amoretti* are equalled, if not surpassed, by others of the illustrious sonnet series of the Renascence. But the *Epithalamion* which is their conclusion has no

equal. In amplitude and splendour it excels all other compositions of the same kind. Even antiquity produced no such poem, none which was unswelled by legends and yet carried so much sail. Its twenty-three stanzas, of from seventeen to nineteen lines, merely describe enthusiastically the whole of the poet's wedding-day, from the dawn of the sun which lit its glorious hours to the night which left the bride in her husband's arms. Each stanza frames a rite of the festival, and beneath the rich, ennobling mythological decoration, simple, homely, circumstances are revealed of this wedding celebrated in a small Irish town on the 11th of June, 1594. This song of joy finds matter in abundant and melodious realism. The poet's genius does not need the rare and the subtle in order to reach beauty, for he knows that beauty has an inexhaustible spring in the common incidents which seem vulgar to other eyes. Never did his genius show its sovereign power as in the *Epithalamion*. The breath which fills each ample strophe and passes unabated through them all to the end, the clear light which floods each successive picture, and the fine classical structure of the whole poem, simple, luminous and inevitable, make this ode Spenser's most perfect production and the lyrical triumph of the English Renascence. All his gifts are united in it and seem to be raised by happiness to a higher power.

He celebrated the marriage of another almost as successfully as his own in *Prothalamion* (1596), which is filled with smooth images and harmonious lines. Before he died he wrote two more hymns to celestial Love and Beauty, as an antidote to the terrestrial hymns of his youth. With years came regret for his early exaltation, that of an artist too much enamoured of women's bodily splendours, and also disgust with a world in which all beauty is ephemeral, a prey to the unceasing assaults of mutability. His thoughts were turning to religion and God, to longing for the great rest which knows no change, when death took him in 1599, at the age of forty-seven.

(f) THE "FAERIE QUEENE."—Even without the *Faerie Queene*, the beauty and the bulk of Spenser's work would have assured him the first place among Elizabethans other than playwrights. Yet it was the *Faerie Queene* which was his masterpiece. He worked at it for twenty years and left it unfinished at his death. It was his own supreme ambition and the supreme pride of England, which confidently pitted this poem, as soon as

its first books appeared, against the most famous epics of ancient and modern times.

It is true that it has not been wholly translated into any language. The insularity of its renown cannot be explained by the fact that it is consecrated to the enhancement of the glory of England and her sovereign, for epics are strictly national by custom. It is the external complexity and the allegorical dress of this poem which have turned readers away from it, even English readers, who give it a formal admiration but hardly glance at it. Its real beauty is screened by its preface, in which the poet explains his virtuous design to make it at once an edifying treatise and a sort of creed in cipher, intelligible only to the initiate. Spenser himself innocently misled the public. He did not acknowledge to himself that his poem was one of the world's most magnificent picture-books. He assumed the grave airs of a preacher, yet could not sustain the part unflinchingly. This admirable painter and enchanting musician posed as a professor of morals. Therefore he has given little satisfaction, except to a few unexacting souls, among those who seek doctrine in a book, and he has alienated those who read verse for pure pleasure.

He would have escaped this neglect had he kept to the first title he had in mind, one much better fitted to indicate the character of his work—*Pageants,* that is decorative pictures, such rhythmic processions and rich spectacles as the Elizabethans loved passionately. His book is indeed nothing else than this, or rather all that makes its beauty consists of nothing else. But the men of his time thought themselves obliged to bring a moral lesson to the forefront. Already this tendency was more marked in the English than in continental nations. The English were beginning to take a national pride in their seriousness, as a quality which distinguished them from the southern peoples whom they considered more frivolous and dissolute than themselves. Spenser was the more inclined to this attitude because he wished to emulate Ariosto and counted on superior virtue to enable him to surpass *Orlando Furioso.* He therefore abandoned his *Pageants* and wrote a vast allegory in order "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline." Like Ariosto, he created a fairylike chivalry, but he intended each of his knights to represent one of "the xii. private moral virtues, as

Aristotle hath devised." The poet does indeed admit that it would have been better if his message had been "delivered plainly in way of precepts," but he makes concession to "the use of these days, seeing all things accounted by their showes, and nothing esteemed of, that is not delightfull and pleasing to commune sence."

It must be acknowledged that in his first two books his aim of edification is sufficiently fulfilled. The allegory is continuous and the moral constantly to the fore. But in the later books both are obscured and the romance is dominant. Spenser is no longer on a higher plane than Ariosto, but walks beside him. Neither as an allegorist nor as a writer of romance does he excel, but as the showman of pageants he is incomparable.

He lacks, first, the simple restrained line of a good allegorist. He has not the central idea, the ardent passion or the unity of design which are essential conditions of a powerful and effective allegory. Instead of unity he has complication. His characters are created for more than one purpose, are both moral and historical personages. His King Arthur, in love with the Fairy Queen, is Magnificence—the supreme virtue which, according to Aristotle, includes all others—and he is also the symbol for divine grace; moreover, he suggests Leicester, Elizabeth's favourite. Artegal is Justice incarnate and stands at the same time for the severe Lord Grey of Wilton to whom Spenser was secretary in Ireland. The allegorical story is thus both moral and political. In the first book the adventures of the Redcross Knight represent, in turn or simultaneously, the Christian soul in quest of truth, the alternatives offered by Protestantism and Catholicism, and the advances and lapses of faith in the sixteenth century. At times the reader in search of absolute comprehension and interpretation is bewildered and feels lost. He is reassured only when he tells himself that to understand is not necessary, to gaze is enough.

Sometimes the allegories are obscure even in detail, and reveal themselves as puerile when they are too well sounded The masque of Cupid, played in the palace of the enchanter Busirane, is very beautiful to the eye. Yet it owes its place to an inconsistency, for while it is intended to show the ills which Cupid inflicts on his victims, in the plot it occurs at the order of a lewd magician who wishes to win the love of a fair captive. The

poet is interested not by the significant, but by the picturesque, and often, when his didacticism is most in evidence, he seems himself to nod. He declaims platitudes in sonorous tones; he is sententious, sometimes frankly tautological.

It certainly is not that his mind is weak, but that his energy is usually reserved for pictures. Here and there, inspired by the occasion, his intellectual vigour breaks forth, as though to vindicate itself. He evinces a penetrating sense of the mystery of memory in his picture of the old archivist crouching in a back chamber in the house of Alma (the temperate soul). With poignant force he represents the tragedy of despair leading to suicide in his famous allegory of the Cave of Despair.

But such passages are exceptional in the poem and cannot be said to give it its character. The same may be said of the romantic element, which charms intermittently and attains to the exquisite only here and there. Spenser, when he wished to create characters, even in a romance, was impeded by his allegory, which asked not for living beings, but for embodied abstractions. To write a romance was not to fulfil his engagements. He is conscious of this fact and weakened and constrained thereby. Yet he enjoys recounting the strange adventures of his heroes, and, even more, those of his heroines, although most of his women pass through his cantos leaving behind them only a memory of their wondrous beauty. Belphebe and Amoret are, however, more substantially present. Spenser has invented an ingenious fable, worthy of Greek mythology, to account for the birth of these twin sisters, one of them a huntress-maid brought up by Diana, the other educated by Venus and vowed to love and marriage. From this premise he derives two contrasted portraits, two distinct lives, almost two characters. But it is Britomart who, alone among Spenserian heroines, really has the dimensions of a romantic creation. Her adventures are traced through three books of the poem. She is a new Bradamante and she certainly owes many characteristics to Ariosto's heroine. She is the chaste and indomitable warrior-maid whose lance makes the most valiant champions bite the dust, and also the passionate woman in love who struggles not to lay bare her heart, who knows the tortures of jealousy, and who at last yields, happy in her defeat, to the emotion which possesses her. Spenser concentrates on the portrait of this enamoured heroine all the

power of subtle analysis of which he is capable. It is mainly she who changes the allegory into a romance.

But even this character is too largely imitated to account for the glory of the poem. The *Faerie Queene* is essentially a picture-gallery. Spenser is a great painter who never held a brush. It was his fate to be born in a country in which the plastic arts did not flourish until two centuries after his time. Had he been born in Italy, he might have been another Titian, a second Veronese; born in Flanders, he would have forestalled Rubens and Rembrandt. Fortune made him a painter in verse, perhaps the most wonderful who has ever lived.

Since he seems never to have been on the Continent, his initiation took place in the England which had for a hundred years been enriched by works of art imported from abroad. He visited the fine collections of his patron Leicester, and knew masterpieces through engravings or through the tapestries of Flanders and Arras. Sidney had spoken to him of the Venetians, of Veronese who had painted his portrait and of the art critics he had met. The ambition to rival painting was born in English poetry through Spenser and Sidney simultaneously. It exists in the *Faerie Queene* as in *Arcadia*.

Many stanzas of the *Faerie Queene* are descriptions of tapestries and pictures, and the line and colour of words competes in them with that on the canvases of the masters. When Spenser purports to draw a person or a scene from nature, he is still inspired by the painter's method. He is unendingly enthralled by the human body, especially woman's body; no one of its details wearies his patience or escapes his observation. His grotesque and monstrous descriptions are not inferior to those in which he aims at absolute beauty. The grotesque is but the reverse of the beautiful: the horrible Dragon who is slain by the Redcross Knight is as much a masterpiece of painting as the nymph Belphebe.

With marvellous success he seeks chiaroscuro effects. He enjoys painting the nude, and he excels at reproducing the rippling surface or changing colour of stuffs.

A great allegorical composition tempts him as much as a portrait. His Wedding of the Thames and the Medway is on the scale of a fresco which would cover a ceiling or a wall in an imperial palace.

But a picture in which everything was in a state of arrested motion was not his sole model. His art was often ruled by the pageants, the processions of costumed characters with expressive gestures whose attitudes revealed the abstractions they represented. Such is his description of the Seven Deadly Sins or his procession of the Seasons and the Months. In these he almost exceeds the limits of poetry in his desire to reproduce in detail, necessarily by successive presentations, those feasts of the eye in which innumerable participants allowed the spectators simultaneously to enjoy every part. Nothing is too long for him. His joy in painting never flags.

He was also influenced by the pantomimes dear to his contemporaries, and in order to eliminate abstractions from his poem, to give a body and a countenance to everything, he staged the moral principles he wished to inculcate. He seems sometimes to be using verse to reproduce the acting of mimes who are taking part in a morality-play, for instance in the episode of the fight between Sir Guyon and Furor and Occasion (II. iv. 4-16). So much is he carried away by his pleasure in a picture that he often half forgets its symbolical and moral meaning. His verses are like all the great allegorical canvases of the Renascence: we contemplate them not for edification, not always even for the meaning we hope to discover in them, but for their perfection of form and brilliancy of colouring. Such is, among others, his allegory of the House of Care, by which he wishes to show the tortures of a heart torn by jealousy. He imagines a lover who believes himself betrayed passing a night in a forge, where the terrible noise of the hammers prevents him from sleeping. The whole scene is pantomimic, thrown into relief with incomparable vigour, and it produces the effect of a nightmare, but it does not suggest jealousy with any precision. It might apply to insomnia induced by any cause—fever, nightmare or toothache. The wonder is in the vision itself and the strength with which it is impressed on the reader's imagination.

The whole of the *Faerie Queene* is full of these suggestions. Where usually a poet would throw a passing hint, adopt a traditional way of speech or merely a metaphor, Spenser insists so that he tends to produce reality. He does not, like others, like Ronsard, content himself with declaring that he is the nurseling of the Muses, or saying that it has been granted him to see,

in the wood beside the spring, the daughters of Memory and the Graces. He tells us the exact spot at which he has been allowed to contemplate them, and shows them dancing, embodied as a painter could make them. In his verses they exist as substantially as the poet who has the vision (VI. x. 5-30).

He borrows the idea or subject of his pictures from everywhere, from books as from paintings and pageants and the scenes on the stage of his time. He rejects no poetic source. We find in him reminiscences of Homer, Lucretius, Virgil and Ovid, Guillaume de Lorris, Chaucer, Langland, Lydgate and Malory, Stephen Hawes and Sackville, Ariosto and Tasso—to cite only the chief of his creditors. Hence the rich diversity of his illuminations, a whole which has elements so disparate that we are driven to ask how his poem could blend them and attain to a sort of unity. Happily the fusion had already been made, and had produced the richest and most complex spectacle of the time, the masque, which was the father of the ballet dear to Louis XIV. and the ancestor of the opera, which combined mythology, allegory and fairy-tale and was accompanied by symbolical dances and music. Much honoured in Spenser's day, it reached its climax after his death, under James I. Spenser occupies a transitional place in the history of the masque. His poem was inspired by the masques he had seen, but itself supplied one of the richest models and, above all, one of the strongest imaginative stimulants to the magnificent masques which came after him.

The *Faerie Queene* may be said to have fixed in a descriptive poem the masques of the English Renascence, thus reviving and perpetuating the ephemeral enchantment of those spectacles. Spenser keeps the sumptuous and changing scenery of the masque, the scene-shifting, the composition of groups, the gestures and pantomime of the actors. He also reproduces the alternation of masque and antimasque, that is of the lofty and the grotesque. Finally, the music of the stage is matched by that of his verses.

Thus he found ready-made the framework of his imaginings. As spectator of some masque, he had seen the fairyland in which his strange stories happen, which is the home of his countless visions. It is essentially the country of the Arthurian romances, of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, but it has acquired more substance; it is the country of *Orlando Furioso*, presented not by a mocking

fancy, but with a seriousness which carries conviction. A country of a thousand enchantments, a wild, desert, indeterminate region of immense forests, Spenser drew it largely from the "savage land" of Ireland, where his dreams could all but grow real and observation could revive his fancy.

It is a world in which surprise is habitual and strangeness the rule. In the end we become acclimatised to it and believe in it, as we accept the impossibilities of dreams and nightmares. As in a dream, a thin thread unites the fantastic discords. The passage from place to place and scene to scene is easy: as in a theatre, a mere lowering of the lights allows scenery to be swiftly changed.

Thus it is that this great poem, so artificially constructed, its disparate elements fused neither by heat of passion nor by fire of intellect, has another unity communicated to it by imaginative force. It has its harmony of atmosphere. Everything is bathed in the same strange, fantastic moonlight in which the contrast between whites and shadows is heightened and wonders are expected as native to the place.

For this dream-world to which Spenser's poem introduces us, and which had a certain operatic charm, it was necessary that the long unfolding visions should be constantly accompanied by music which would suspend the activity of the logical faculties and help to give credence to the chimeras. The illusion is effected by means of the powerful monotony of the nine-lined stanza, the stanza of the courtly ballade with decasyllabic lines to which a final alexandrine is added.[1]

Had Spenser been less painter than narrator, he would not have substituted this stanza for the *ottava rima* of his Italian masters, for he would have feared to make his story fragmentary by this alexandrine line, of which the majestic length always suggests a conclusion, marking the end of each stanza and isolating it. But he liked the architectural effect of the long *finale* in his descriptions, and the expanded stanza corresponded to his wonted phrasing, to the long periods habitual to him, as to his contemporaries, even in prose. His stanza was the *mould* natural to his syntax and his thought. Although it was used by many poets after him, and by some of the greatest—Thomson,

[1] The formula of the line is *a b a b b c b c c*. It is a true stanza, a perfect stanza of which the rhymes are so interlaced that it cannot be broken.

Byron, Shelley, Keats—it never seems to adapt itself as well to their tones as to his, for the moderns have a mode of thought and expression which is briefer, more analytical and more disjointed than Spenser's. The poet of to-day is shorter in the wind. His breath fills less easily and less constantly the broad interior of this harmoniously proportioned urn.

Spenser's metre, deliberately lengthened and weighted, is so ample and so slow that its majesty, like that of a deep, evenly flowing river, compensates for the qualities it has lost. The very fact that the poem is written in stanzas and all in this measure has important consequences. We hear music which has slowed down, music with a perpetually recurring measure which lulls our intellect and little by little leads us away from the real world into another, a world of order and harmony where this stanza seems to be the natural rhythm. It keeps time in fairyland. It measures the hours in the region of nowhere, the kingdom of illusion. It has a hypnotic effect, induces a slumber in which the things of life are remote and we are in communion only with the poet's pictures. Every movement is regulated by it and obeys its laws, as though it were a metronome by which all the characters timed their acts and words. Never hurried, eternally reborn, its empire is that of a continuous sound in nature, as of the winds or the sea. No single stanza read separately can give an idea of the immense part which the stanza plays in this poem, in which each one inherits the cumulative force of all its predecessors. From his perception that they are on one pattern, the reader is brought to feel every individual stanza to be essential to the general order, and this unconscious recognition of an inevitability of form gives added value to the contents of the verses.

It is here and in his pictures that Spenser is marvellous. His glory must not be established on the less solid elements of the *Faerie Queene*. To let it rest on the moral value or the thought of the poem or on the feeling it conceals would be mistaken. Nor do we diminish his glory when we are thus careful of its security. It is enough for the renown of this great poem that, to music of unfailing harmony, it unrolls before our eyes innumerable dazzling visions. It is enough for Spenser's name that he was one of the master musicians, and perhaps the greatest of the picture-makers, of this world.

4. *Other Court Poets. Raleigh, Oxford, Fulke Greville.*—Sir Walter Raleigh (1552?-1618)[1] was near Lyly, Sidney and Spenser in age and Spenser's friend, and was, like them all, connected with the court. He was occasionally a poet. He is the type of the fine courtier, high-spirited, proud and bold, who writes some striking verses, like marginal scribblings to the page on which his wonderfully active career is set forth. Of his long poem to Cynthia, otherwise Elizabeth, nothing is left but a fragment in which the former favourite of the queen flogs himself into a pretence of devouring love and despairing regrets. Of far more worth are his few sonnets, of which one magnificently welcomes Spenser's masterpiece, and some short lyrical pieces in which this adventurer condemns the emptiness of the courtly life which had fascinated him (*The Lie, The Pilgrimage*).

Raleigh gave more time to prose than poetry. With attractive simplicity he relates his expedition to Guiana in search of the fabulous Manoa. In the prison he left only for the scaffold he wrote an eloquent *History of the World*, in which his shortcomings as an historian are redeemed by superb pages. About 1593 he had been suspected of sympathy for Marlowe's atheism, although he was, in point of fact, a deist with his own philosophy who ended his life absorbed in grave religious thought. In the work of this amateur there is something at once strange and passionate which compels attention.

Among the men of the court, Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford (1550-1604),[2] was distinguished as much by his cult of poetry as by the extravagance of his life. The typical great Italianate lord, he resumed in himself several of the vices and some of the artistic and literary qualities of the Transalpine peninsula. His lyrical verse is scattered among such collections of the period as the *Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1576) and does not lack grace and facility. He exemplifies the taste for letters which reigned in the court circle and which might be found in a dissolute fop like himself as well as in a daring adventurer like Raleigh, or in Sidney, the mirror of perfect chivalry. Beside the court poets, professional men of letters

[1] Life by William Oldys (1736, reprinted 1829), by E. Gosse (1886), by H. de Selincourt, *Great Raleigh* (1908), etc. Collected poems published by J. Hannah (1886). *The Discovery of Guiana* (1st ed. 1596, reprinted in Hakluyt's *Voyages*, vol. iii., 1598). *The History of the World* (1st ed., 1614).

[2] His poems were collected by Grosart in *Miscellanies of the Fuller Worthies Library* (1872).

were ranged—Lyly who dedicated his *Euphues* to Oxford, Spenser who headed his *Calendar* with Sidney's name and addressed the preface of his *Faerie Queene* to Raleigh. The court and its neighbourhood were the first home of the Renascence.

Oxford was Sidney's enemy. Sir Edward Dyer, famous in his own time for his lost elegies, and Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke (1554-1628),[1] were his most intimate and constant friends. Fulke Greville wrote his verses in his youth although most of them did not appear until after his death. He was Sidney's first biographer. Thoughtful and sententious, a great admirer of Elizabeth, whose royal greatness he celebrated and whose personal praises he sang in his *Cælica,* Fulke Greville's work includes beautiful imaginative lines and others which have a noble but slightly starched and superannuated grace. The cast of his mind made him a man of the period of *Euphues* and *Arcadia.* His Myra, who bathed,

> Washing the waters with her beauty's white,

is the sister of Sidney's Philoclea.

[1] *Certain Learned and Elegant Works Written in his Youth and Familiar Exercise with Sir Philip Sidney* (1633); *Life of Sidney* (published 1652); *Remains* (poems on the monarchy and on religion: 1670); *Complete Works,* published by Grosart, 4 vols. (1870).

CHAPTER III

POETRY FROM 1590 TO 1625

1. *Elizabethan Poetry from 1590 to 1603.*[1]—Outside the theatre, almost all the literature of the Elizabethan period properly so called, that is down to 1603, derived from Lyly, Sidney and Spenser. Romances bore the imprint of *Euphues* and *Arcadia* in turn or simultaneously. Pastorals imitated from Spenser or Sidney abounded. *Astrophel and Stella,* from the moment of its publication, provoked a whole flowering season of sonnets. The successive appearance, about 1590, of Sidney's sonnets and *Arcadia,* and of the first books of the *Faerie Queene,* was the signal for an intense literary activity. It was then that a whole generation born some ten years after Spenser entered the arena of letters. The poetry alone shows such a literary ferment as makes very difficult the task of presenting the new works methodically. Doubtless drama attracted the writers who were most vital and energetic, but the majority of them turned from time to time to pure poetry as a relaxation, and wrote verses in the fashionable poetic genres. We are thus led to follow genres rather than individuals. First, however, we must deal with the voluminous works of two poets whose contribution to the drama was slight and unimportant. Their production continued into the next century, but the date of their birth and the atmosphere in which their talent was formed make them two Elizabethans. They are Daniel and Drayton.

Each of them produced one of the longest poems of the period, the *Faerie Queene* excepted. The American critic Lowell could call Daniel's *Civil Wars* and Drayton's *Polyolbion* the megalosaurus and plesiosaurus of the Renascence. These poets express, more directly than Spenser, their patriotic feeling, which is less troubled than his by the dream of a golden age or by

[1] F. E. Schelling, *English Literature During the Lifetime of Shakespeare* (1910).

hostility to the present. They survive only in a few pages of verse and a few short poems, but their figures are distinct and can be traced in every part of the considerable body of their works.

(*a*) SAMUEL DANIEL.—Samuel Daniel (1562-1619)[1] was born in Somerset, and the son of a music-master. After having passed through Oxford and visited Italy, he was tutor first to William Herbert, son of the Earl of Pembroke and of Sidney's sister, and then to a daughter of the virtuous Countess of Cumberland. After Spenser's death he became a sort of voluntary poet-laureate. Under James I. he was dramatic censor and groom of the chamber to the queen. His tastes were sober and moderate; he lived quietly in his London house cultivating the Muses; then retired to a Somersetshire farm. By the even march of his existence he contrasted with most of his contemporary poets. His poetry, well behaved as he, is the most tranquil and classical of the period. Nearly everything in the English Renascence which shocked French taste when this had been purified by the seventeenth century is missing from Daniel's work, and so is the "fine frenzy" beloved of the Elizabethans. He was a moralist and historian first of all; he wrote the poetry of reflection, not of passion. His calm voice could, in that tumultuous time, hardly make itself heard. A correct and pure writer, he brought the qualities of prose into verse. Imagination is rare in his subjects and never disturbs his style.

He made trial of the theatre, but since he lacked the impetuous vigour of his dramatic rivals, since he was in love with nobility and serenity, he turned from the popular stage and wrote tragedies, classical in form, modelled on Seneca and the French poet Garnier—*Cleopatra* in 1594 and *Philotas* in 1611. These academic dramas could have no more than a *succès d'estime*. He succeeded better with his masques, which contain very attractive passages: *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (1604), *The Queen's Arcadia, a Pastoral Tragi-comedy* (1606) and *Hymen's Triumph*.

Round about his chief work, *Civil Wars*, are grouped a fair number of miscellaneous poems, sonnets to Delia, epistles, dedi-

[1] Complete poetical works in *Chalmers's British Poets*, vol. iii.; complete works in prose and verse published by Grosart, 5 vols. (1885). His *Delia* reprinted by Arber in *An English Garner*, vol. iii.

cations, panegyrics, funeral eulogies, pastoral songs. The even quality of his verses is surprising for his day.

He translates with charm the suave eulogy of the golden age in Tasso's *Aminta.* There is real feeling in his *Letter from Octavia to Antony* (1599), and even more in his *Complaint of Rosamond* (1592), in which the unhappy mistress of Henry II. mingles her regret for her transgressions and her sighs for her lost beauty. She draws the moral from her story herself, and it is softened as it passes through her lips.

But a mood of serious reflection was more habitual to Daniel than fancy or tenderness. It is not only by accident that the lines from his work which are most often quoted are the lyrical dialogue between Ulysses and the Siren, standing for honour and pleasure, labour and rest, and the *Epistle to the Countess of Cumberland,* in which he defines, in fine, strong and calm stanzas, the sage who inhabits the serene temples of wisdom and is raised above private passion or political agitation.

Apt as he is to discourse and discuss in verse, his talent is happily displayed in a didactic poem in the form of a dialogue, *Musophilus* (1599), which contains a general defence of letters. Musophilus constitutes himself champion of letters against Philocosmus, who recommends an active life and rules out all poetry which does not impel to heroic action. Like Spenser in the *Teares of the Muses,* but with less vehement rhetoric, Musophilus deplores that so little patronage should be given to literature. He sees poetry and eloquence as the guardians of lofty morals and the forces which cleanse a nation. He has a deep faith in the strength and destiny of his mother-tongue. What a great thing it would be if England, first of the nations in worth, became first in poetry also! Daniel has a vision of an English literature which should be read over the whole world. It should supplant Italian literature, now decadent:

> When all that ever hotter spir'ts express'd,
> Comes better'd by the patience of the north.

Patriotism was Daniel's dominant feeling and it led him to devote his capital effort to the history of his country. He recounts no such dream of the past as Spenser, nor such a long, mainly legendary chronicle as William Warner, in rude and awkward fourteen-syllabled lines, told in *Albion's England* (1586),

a miscellany of ill-arranged stories which was so successful that it was republished in successive and enlarged editions until the author's death in 1609. Daniel did not share Warner's desire to begin his book at the Flood and bring it down to the execution of Mary Stuart. He was impressed by the effects of civil war and uneasy lest, since the succession to Elizabeth was entirely uncertain, it should be renewed. He therefore chose no period of glory for his theme, but told in narrative the story which was at this moment being dramatised, which Shakespeare was taking for the subject of his plays, the history of the bloodthirsty struggle between the houses of Lancaster and York. The eight cantos of Daniel's *Civil Wars,* published from 1595 to 1609, treat of the misfortunes of England from the reign of Richard II. until the break between Warwick and Edward IV., and, in spite of their seven to eight thousand lines, they leave the tale unfinished. It corresponds exactly to the Shakespearean "histories," *Richard II., Henry IV., Henry V.* and the two first parts of *Henry VI.,* sometimes following them and sometimes going ahead of them. Daniel's exposition is more accurate, cool and dignified than the plays, which bring on to the stage a succession of animated pictures by turns chivalrous and comic, arbitrary alike in their omissions and additions. It is strange to read Daniel's calm stanzas, and to remember the tumultuous dramas in which the same stories are told, or Spenser's romantic transfiguration of the national annals. Daniel's clear and expressed intention is to transfigure nothing:

I versify the truth, not poetize.

Unfortunately he poetises all too little. Conscientiously he keeps pace with facts, adding fictions only very rarely. It is remarkable that his fictions have the same turn as in the pseudo-classical epics. They are inserted deliberately as ornaments, intellectual relaxations, for instance the mythological origin he fabricates for printing and artillery, two ill-omened inventions which Nemesis orders Pandora to supply.

This element of the marvellous is exceptional in Daniel's work. If his facts are dull, so much the worse; if dramatic, so much the better. Nor does he seek to interest by penetrating or lively portrayal of character. His calm narrative does scant justice to such outstanding personalities as the wild Margaret of

Anjou, or to scenes of violence like Jack Cade's rebellion. If there is fairly lifelike psychology in his story of the first interviews between Edward IV. and Lady Elizabeth Grey, it probably is that the author is inspired by the staging of this incident in *Henry VI*. The best part of his poem is, besides a few vigorous stories, the moral reflections arising out of his patriotism as it is wounded by his own story of atrocious intestine conflict.

On the whole this long poem is a mistake. The careful and correct Daniel, treating the most tragic of subjects, is tedious. It is his misfortune to have misused his gifts. It would have taken a d'Aubigné to do justice to material as sombre and as bloodstained.

With his qualities and defects, Daniel was the writer of that day whose work was most justly estimated when it appeared. Spenser, who knew him at the outset of his career, praised his harmony and the pathos of his *Complaint of Rosamond,* but blamed him for flying too timidly and near the ground, exhorting him:

Then rouze thy feathers quickly, Daniell.

Ben Jonson more bluntly says that he was "a good honest man, but no poet." Drayton considered that he was "too much historian in verse" and that "his manner better fitted prose." He was indeed, as will be seen, one of the best prose-writers of his time. William Browne, on the other hand, admired the purity of his poetic style and called him "well-languaged."

This purity, then so rare, won him a recrudescence of favour in the nineteenth century. Writers like Wordsworth and Coleridge who were working for the simplification of the language praise Daniel for having banished eccentricities and arbitrary inventions from his style. Southey is struck by his discreet use of the pathetic and says that he writes "always in a strain of tender feeling, and in language as easy and natural as it is pure."

His contemporaries, who loved ardour, missed in his work the passionate qualities and the movement, brilliancy and variety which they prized more than aught else. For us, the very absence of the merits which the Elizabethans often carried to excess makes pleasantly restful reading of his verses. It is as though we sailed for a day on smooth waters after passing

through a storm. Moreover, if his reflections are not strikingly new, they are, as a rule, full of good sense and reason and are lit by a serene philosophy: he is dignified and proud as well as wise. He is, moreover, never harsh and constantly self-controlled.

(*b*) MICHAEL DRAYTON.[1]—Drayton's career ran parallel to that of Daniel and his poetry belongs to much the same genres. Yet it is the antithesis of Daniel's poetry. Instead of even, rather timid purity, it has warmth and dash, flights and falls.

He was born *in 1563, one year after Daniel and one year* before Shakespeare, in Shakespeare's Warwickshire, which lies at the heart of England. He was brought up on the borders of the Forest of Arden, on the banks of the Ankor:

Fair Arden, thou my Tempe art alone,
And thou, sweet Ankor, art my Helicon.

He cherished poetic ambitions in his first youth, for he tells us that at ten years old he implored his guardian, "clasping my slender arms about his thigh," to make him a poet, and the guardian smilingly set him to read Mantuanus and Virgil, while a minstrel of Polesworth Castle, where he was page, introduced him to popular songs and ballads. It is not known whether he were ever at a university, and his poetic production began late. He made his real beginning with *Idea, the Shepherd's Garland* (1593), which was inspired by Spenser, but is neither archaic nor moralising. Disguised as Roland, Drayton sings the praises of Beta, or Queen Elizabeth, and bewails, in turn, the vanished heroes of England and the rejection of his suit by his hard-hearted mistress, Idea. In 1594 he published his first sonnets with the title *Ideas Mirrour*. His eclogues and his sonnets reappeared in several successive editions, always with corrections and additions, a fate shared by most of his verses, for he was perpetually in quest of change.

In 1596 he had turned to historical poetry and he wrote his *Mortimeriados*, which he retouched and republished in 1603 under the title of *The Barons' War*. In moments snatched from this history he wrote the *Heroical Epistles of England* (1597).

[1] Complete works in *Chalmers's British Poets*, vol. vi. Selection of poems ed. by Bullen (1883). *The Barons' Wars, Nymphidia and other Poems*, ed Morley (1887). Selections from the poems of Daniel and Drayton, ed. by Beeching (1899). For criticism see O. Elton, *Michael Drayton* (2nd ed, 1905).

Upon the death of Elizabeth he acclaimed the advent of James I., the lettered king, of whom, after the reign of the parsimonious queen, writers expected a sort of age of gold. Drayton was soon disappointed, and, abandoning the court, he wrote two obscure and mediocre satires, *The Owl* (1604) and the *Man in the Moon* (1605), then certain odes far superior to his satires (1606).

Thereafter he concentrated on his immense *Polyolbion,* which he planned before 1598 and of which the first eighteen cantos appeared in 1613, the twelve others in 1622. In 1627, when he was growing old, he produced a collection which is full of freshness and includes his *Nymphidia* and his *Quest of Cynthia,* and in 1631 he published the *Muses Elizium.* He died in this year at the age of sixty-eight.

The whole of his very diverse work shows an abundant fancy, active and animated, but not subtle. He versifies with extreme facility. Reading certain of his poems, for instance the ode on the battle of Agincourt, we are carried away by the martial rhythm, although the substance is thin and the thought as banal as in Laurence Minot's songs. Drayton's style has vigour and colour without correctness. He cares for colour more than for line. His amorphous sentences, and his periods connected by relatives at once vague and heavy, are stumbling-blocks to the reader, who follows him with some difficulty. There are striking, energetic words, but hardly a stanza has its rightful balance. This poet does not err from lack of industry or because he improvises hastily, for never were verses more courageously retouched than his. He went so far as to rewrite the whole of his *Mortimeriados,* substituting the *ottava rima* for its original seven-lined stanza. The benefit of such alterations is not invariably evident, but he always accounted for them to himself by particular reasons.

It pleased him to be independent, an innovator in such matters. He wrote his immense *Polyolbion* in alexandrines, contrary to the custom which favoured lines of ten or fourteen syllables. On the whole the choice was not happy. Against the four rhythmic accents of the French alexandrine, the English contains six, and is thus longer, slower and heavier. The monotony caused by the median cæsura is the more wearisome. Drayton's example was not followed. Mr. Elton, the most sympathetic of

his critics, quaintly defines the effect produced: "it has a kind of heavy dignity, like a Lord Mayor's coach."

Drayton was better inspired when he used the decasyllabic couplet in many of his poems, for instance in his *Heroical Epistles,* where the couplet has a pliability and a variety of division which characterised it too little when it was handled by the later classicists. His epistle to Henry Reynolds (1627), which is in this form, contains, if not his *ars poetica,* at least his opinions on the poets of his time, and it shows his romantic tastes very clearly.

His work has more than one analogy with that of William Dunbar—poverty of thought and commonplace feeling, but swing and go and a rhythm which carries the reader along. All that survives of Drayton in anthologies is some short poems—the martial ballad to the glory of Agincourt and the ardent stanzas on the voyage to Virginia—and *Nymphidia,* that amusing fantasia in which he relates the great quarrel which brought Oberon and the knight Pigwiggen to blows for love of Queen Mab. Here he acknowledges a debt to Chaucer, who sang of Sir Thopas, and to Rabelais, who celebrated Pantagruel, but forgets Shakespeare, who in *Midsummer Night's Dream* celebrated the fairy queen and called lilliputian elves to life. He derives his tone and his form from Chaucer. He repeats the very stanza of *Sir Thopas—aaabcccb,* eight-syllabled separated by six-syllabled *(b)* lines, these last with feminine rhymes. He parodies the chivalry and tournaments which Spenser sang in the *Faerie Queene,* and he remembers Orlando's fury in the madness of his Oberon. But these literary reminiscences are easily carried by a fantasia which has no aim but to provoke laughter. Drayton's search is for the comic rather than the graceful, the grotesque rather than the poetic. He shows Oberon mad with jealousy, flying at everyone he meets, armed with an acorn which he brandishes by the stalk, mistaking a wasp for Pigwiggen and a luminous worm for a devil. He hurls himself at a hive, smears himself with honey and wax, rides an ant who throws him into the mud and climbs on to a molehill, whence he tumbles into a lake and is somewhat calmed by the water. Finally he makes a boat of his acorn and escapes. The episode is typical of the tone and character of this tiny children's epic.

Laughter dominates it, but in some other little poems Dray-

ton's fancy, although never exquisite, is yet graceful and almost dreamy, for instance in his *Quest of Cynthia*, in which he represents himself as following the goddess through the country, where her divine steps have left charming vestiges, for many little flowers have opened beneath her feet. He reaches her at last, and the two decide to live together in love and innocence. Here Cynthia symbolises nature. The theme might he that of a Lake poet, but it is clothed in Elizabethan fancy.

Drayton's long poems have the same qualities of energy and imagination as the short, but are clogged and petrified by his rebellious material. Where, to sustain his more ambitious work, he needed intellectual force and deliberate reflection, he disposed only of vivacity and fancy. This is true of his *Barons' Wars*, a pendant to Daniel's *Civil Wars*. Like Daniel, Drayton wished to paint one of the tragic periods of the national history and to construct in epical form what was being presented on the public stage. But instead of the Wars of the Roses which Shakespeare dramatised, he chose the reign of Edward II. and the Barons' struggle against Queen Isabella's favourite, Mortimer, a theme which Marlowe had staged in *Edward II.* Less of a purist than Daniel, addicted to conceits, capable of more grandiose images, but afflicted with a confused syntax, Drayton is less inclined than he to moral reflection, but, having more fire, succeeds better in producing vigorous and brilliant pictures. He has some fine martial stanzas, and others, to describe the murder of Edward II., which are powerful, while those which paint the amours of the queen and Mortimer, and show the young Edward about to break in on them to avenge his father's death, are coloured and voluptuous, Italian in the manner of *Venus and Adonis* or *Hero and Leander*. The poem has over Daniel's the further advantage that it confines itself to a subject which has unity. But its defect arises out of the poet's moral indecision. He is drawn to the different characters of his story in turn when they love or suffer, and disperses his sympathy with that of the reader. He seems to have no preferences and to aim at no conclusions, and the interest of his narrative suffers.

His *Heroical Epistles* (1597) may have been partly inspired by the success of Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond*. But his chief model was the letters exchanged between the famous lovers of mythology in Ovid's *Heroides*. Drayton's patriotism led him

similarly to present the famous characters of English history. He gives us, with the answers, Rosamond's letter to her lover, Henry II.; King John's letter to Matilda Fitzwalter; those of Queen Isabella to Mortimer; the Black Prince to the Countess of Salisbury; Isabella to Richard II.; Queen Katherine, widow of Henry V., to Owen Tudor; Eleanor Cobham to her husband, Gloucester; Suffolk to Queen Margaret, wife of Henry VI.; Edward IV. to his mistress, Jane Shore; Mary, queen of France and daughter of Henry VIII., to Suffolk; Surrey to Lady Geraldine; Dudley to Lady Jane Grey. As a means of bringing life back to history, dramatically as on the stage, the idea is ingenious, and it is proof of the appetite of the nation for everything taken from its annals. The psychological essay was also a happy one. Drayton is not without sense of character, although it is not strong and penetrating enough in him to throw his personages into the relief which would have saved them from confusion and preserved this interesting poem against the assaults of time. More clearly than elsewhere we have here the impression that Drayton just misses success, that he all but has the talent necessary to a masterpiece, but that something lacking in his intellectual and artistic equipment holds him back on the brink of triumph.

We come to the one of his works which by its size and the number of years he spent on it is chief, his *Polyolbion*, in which his ardent patriotism finds vent better than anywhere else. Here he forsakes history for geography. He celebrates in fifteen thousand alexandrines the isle "of many blessings" (Polyolbion), conducting the reader through all the counties of England, by means not of such a rapid catalogue of resources as that made by the author of *Brut*, but by numerous detailed descriptions enriched by all the local legends.

The work is imposing because it is so greatly ambitious, and touching because through all difficulties and the inevitable monotony of his plan the poet is upheld by love for his native land. From Cornwall and Devon to Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, thence, by way of Salisbury and Bristol, to Wales and to the Midlands, Warwickshire, the poet's birthplace, then Oxford, London, Surrey, Sussex, Kent, through Suffolk and Norfolk, and through every county to the north, to Yorkshire in the east and to the Lake Country in the west, he pursues his way.

erudite character of the poem is emphasised by the
pended to its eighteen first cantos by the learned John
heir to the glory of Camden the antiquary. But accuracy
only half of Drayton's plan. He wished also to poetise.
the dualism curiously emphasised by Selden's initial

gentlewomen and their loves is consecrated all the wooing language,
ns to love passions and sweet embracements feigned by the Muse
gst hills and rivers. Whatsoever tastes of description, battle, story,
use antiquity, and (which my particular study caused me sometime
mber) law of the kingdom, to the more severe reader.

It must be acknowledged that a puerile mythology decorates
e poem. Every hill, every valley is personified. Every river,
particular, is endowed with life, turned into a genius or a
ymph. The process is easy and unvaried; it is as though
Boileau's Rhine "à la barbe limoneuse" were multiplied a hun-
dredfold. There are no descriptions, in the modern sense, of
natural features. Each stream and slope has a surprising
memory replete with history or legend, and reproducing, as well
as a passage of real history, the past of Brut's country, Albion.

What is astonishing is the untiring zest with which Drayton
pursues a theme at once flat and extravagant, multiple and
monotonous. In the districts which he knows more intimately,
like his own county of Warwickshire, he stays to paint pictures
which are both lively and fresh. His deer-hunt in the forest of
Arden is often quoted. And even in the dullest passages he has
some lines, written from the heart and frankly worded and
turned, which awake nodding attention and interrupt the increas-
ing impression of bad taste and the ridiculous.

Nothing but the analysis of a canto can give an idea of this
astonishing work. In the sixteenth the poet leads us from stream
to stream to London, following the Coln as it flows, by way of
St. Albans and Uxbridge, into the Thames a little belo
Windsor.

The poem begins with the Ver, a small tributary of the Co
which passes Watling Street on its course. The Roman road a
the stream engage in conversation, Watling Street asking the
the reason of the great changes which have occurred on its ba
and made a fertile corn-growing country into a sandy waste

At which the silent brook shrunk in his silver bed,
And feign'd as he away would instantly have fled;
Suspecting present speech might passèd grief renew.

But the road persists, inquiring why Verulam, the cradle of the race of Dudley already sung by Spenser, is in ruins. Finally Ver answers that Verulam was ruined by the destruction of the monasteries, whereat the Catholic stream cannot contain its indignation. To pacify it, Watling Street offers to relate its own history from the days of Malmutius, together with that of its sisters, the three other great Roman roads. Accordingly it describes the course of each and the villages through which they have passed. When it pauses, Ver urges it to continue, and

With these persuasive words, smooth Ver the Watling wan,
Stroking her dusty face.

At last the story is told, and

This said, the aged street sagg'd sadly on alone.

The canto goes on to eulogise the situation of London and the wealth and activity of the great river port. It ends with a diatribe against the gentry, declaring them to be lazy and devoted to luxury and to be impoverishing their country by importing from abroad, at great cost, the articles necessary to their extravagant and epicurean tastes.

This canto, neither worse nor better than the average, may be taken as typical. More than once it might provoke laughter and ridicule, for the humanised rivers, roads and hills cut very strange figures, and there is something childish, fitted to childish minds, about the whole conception. But the spirit of the Renascence was, after all, youthful in the extreme. The whole period is not exempt from a suspicion of puerility, mingled with all that it had of the great and the sublime.

Drayton's was a mad enterprise. The game was lost before it was begun. Yet his ardour, his fancy, his eccentricity, his flatness, his very bad taste, make his *Polyolbion* a characteristic product of his time.

(c) The Collections of Lyrical Verse. The Songs — Besides Daniel and Drayton, there were in the Elizabethan age dramatic authors who wrote a little verse as secondary to their plays, and also minor poets who followed one of the literary

fashions of the moment. Certain genres were particularly in favour, and to note their characteristics will repay us better than to deal with each individual by himself.

In those days the works of single authors were less read than the collections in which some publisher arbitrarily brought together sets of verses, often of uncertain authorship. Here and there these books include the signature of a great lord or a famous poet, but usually the poems are signed only by initials and sometimes nothing indicates their authorship. Tottel's famous *Miscellany* had been followed by the *Paradyse of Dainty Devises* in 1576, *A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions* in 1578 and *A Handefull of Pleasant Delites* in 1584, and now came the *Phœnix Nest* in 1593, the *Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599, *England's Helicon, England's Parnassus* and *Belvedere* in 1600, *Poetical Rapsody* in 1602, and others. In almost all these collections exquisite poems are elbowed by others which are mediocre or even deplorable; the worst rhymesters are associated with the true poets.

It was in these collections that some poets placed their best work, like the prolific Nicholas Breton (1545?-1626), whose engaging pastoral vein was never better displayed than in the *Helicon*, and Richard Barnfield (1564-1627), whose most charming little odes appeared in the *Passionate Pilgrim* and were long attributed to Shakespeare.

The shortest pieces, and especially the songs, are what is best in these collections.[1] The Elizabethan age cannot claim the song exclusively, for songs were made throughout the English Renascence. Songs are of all time and all countries. Yet they were perhaps never so copious, so various and so winged as in this period. They best accomplished the blending of the genius of the people and the artistic sense awakened by humanism. The fusion was attempted in all genres but with very unequal success. In most of the long poems taste is shocked by frequent disparities. The reader of to-day is offended by the excess of disorder and of pedantry in turn. But in numerous songs and slight lyrical

[1] *Elizabethan Lyrics*, ed. Bullen (1885); *England's Helicon*, 1st ed. (1600), reprinted by Bullen (1887); *An English Garner*, ed. Arber, 7 vols. (1877-83); *Seventeenth Century Lyrics*, ed. Saintsbury (Rivingtons); *English Madrigal Verse* (1588-1632), ed. Fellowes (Oxford University Press, 1920). Criticism: J. Erskine, *The Elizabethan Lyric* (1903); Saintsbury, *A History of Elizabethan Literature*; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. iv., chap. vi.

pieces artifice is so well wedded to nature that the two are hardly distinguishable. The rudeness or clumsiness of the popular muse has been penetrated by graceful refinements of vocabulary and a pliability of versification once unknown to it. The best examples have a perfection which is never recaptured.

And the song was everywhere, sung in halls and parlours, trolled along the roads. It was in towns and in the country, on the stage and in romances. It filled whole collections; some poets specialised in it, but here and there an excellent ditty was born on the lips of a fine lord or lady who never made another. England, destitute of the plastic arts, became the impassioned lover of song. She had her traditional airs, and she listened eagerly to those which reached her from abroad, especially from Italy. She translated foreign songs and took them to herself, transforming them and inspired by them to new endeavour. Most were love-songs, some very free and profane. But others were religious, and many purely fantastic. They were in every mood—grave, mocking, sentimental, cynical. They were sung to the accompaniment of virginals, the spinet of that day, or of flageolets or of the viola da gamba or the guitar. They were written by the greatest and by unknown poets. England, Merry England was a nest of singing birds.

Spenser inserted very beautiful slightly over-elaborate songs in his *Shepheard's Calendar*. His natural richness and loftiness led him to make of the song a little ode, if not such a magnificent ode as *Epithalamion*. Sidney kept nearer to the song properly so called, of which some specimens, very full of life, follow his sonnets, the first with the refrain, "To you, to you, all song of praise is due," and his nocturnes, "Only Joy! Now here you are," and "Who is it that this dark night?" He is less happy in the large number of songs scattered through his *Arcadia*. The most popular of his songs is the *Dirge of Love*, "Ring out your bells!" Many are bold, passionate songs, not without a fantastic element which is sometimes exquisite, and nearly always they have a catching refrain.

The author of *Tamburlaine* and *Dr. Faustus* laid his sonorous trumpet aside one day to play a pastoral air on a reed-pipe. He sang the shepherd's call to the shepherdess, "Come, live with me and be my love," and Raleigh answered for the girl with a refusal, "If all the world and love were young."

These are true and charming songs. But the period was not satisfied with a few scattered airs, and there were whole collections which included verse and music. One of the first in date was made by William Byrd, gentleman of the Chapel Royal, who in 1587-8 published his *Psalms, Sonnets and Songs of Sadness and Piety,* a simple, lucid and pleasant miscellany although one without much poetry. Its light songs are imitated or translated from the Italian.

Much warmer in tone, richer in imagery and more effeminate and languorous is the collection of Nicholas Yonge, *Musica Transalpina* (1588), in which the Italian note sounds yet more clearly. Yonge was a merchant whose trade brought him into touch with Italy. He or the nameless gentleman who supplied him with his translations was so much under Italian influence that he imitated even the terminations of metrical lines in that language and ended almost all his own with feminine rhymes. Here and there something turgid or banal or a richness which is slightly common spoils this curious collection.

Something fundamentally commonplace and a commonplace formal correctness also mar John Dowland's three *Books of Songs or Airs* which appeared in 1597, 1600 and 1603. A musician of repute, John Dowland, about 1580, visited France, "a nation furnished with great variety of music." Then, having acquired, he says, a surer judgment, he made a stay in Germany and in Italy, where he was much appreciated, and afterwards in Denmark. In 1597 he returned to England and gave lessons on the lute. The airs in his books are, except for a few well-turned pieces, better than their verses.

Thomas Campion's four *Books of Airs,* published from 1601 to 1613, are of far greater value. This doctor of medicine, whose distraction was music, was a true poet. He turned critic and attacked rhymed verse, at which he excelled, in order to defend measured metres modelled on antiquity. In his *Books of Airs,* where he fortunately follows the national tradition, he protests against the earlier collections. He will have nothing to do with Italian or French airs. His intention is to publish English airs, and he states that he will endeavour to couple words and notes harmoniously. His songs are by turns simple and strange, ancient and modern, sensual and passionate, bacchic and pious, worldly and rustic. Their form and matter are of

every kind, but in all the rhythm is excellent and the language pleasant.

Some of Campion's most graceful songs occur not in his collections, but in his masques. The most exquisite songs of all were to be heard on the stage, and in order to cull them nearly every comedy and romantic play of the age must be searched.

Soı [illegible] a little mincing, are in [illegible] n the posthumous edition [illegible] recent critics not to him but to the period after his—"Cupid and my Campaspe played," "O yes, O yes, if any maid." Many very pleasing songs occur in George Peele's *Judgement of Paris*. The best of the songs of Robert Greene and of Lodge are, however, in their romances, that lovely cradle-song "Weepe not, my wanton" in Greene's *Menaphon*, and the charming madrigal "Love in my bosom like a bee" in Lodge's *Rosalinde*.

The songs with which Shakespeare has sown his work are the most original and spontaneous of all and the richest in impressions of nature. A fresh and rustic realism runs through more than one of them—the contrasted notes of the cuckoo and the owl in "When daisies pied" in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the song of Amiens on ingratitude in *As You Like It*, with its evocation of the keen-toothed winter wind and the waters warped by frost, or, in the same play, the page's song, its anacreontic moral the fresher for being trilled among green cornfields and English acres of rye, or again the vagrant's song which Autolycus sings full-throatedly in *Winter's Tale* as he tramps the long English roads —"When daffodils begin to peer," and the white sheet is "bleaching on the hedge" and "the sweet birds, O how they sing!"

There are also the purely fantastic songs which still borrow much from nature, the cradle-song in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, sending the "spotted snakes, with double tongue," the "thorny hedgehogs" and the "newts and blind-worms" from the bank where Titania sleeps; Ariel's, who lies "in a cowslip's bell" and flies "on the bat's back," his call to the fairies:

> Come unto these yellow sands,
> And then take hands,

and his wonderful song of the sea-change suffered by Ferdinand's father, "full fathom five" beneath the waters.

There are the short, light songs of feeling, that which tells of the birth of love, "Tell me, where is fancy bred" while Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* chooses the casket, Balthazar's song on the inconstancy of men in *Much Ado About Nothing,* "Sigh no more, ladies," and the song to which poor, forsaken Mariana listens in *Measure for Measure,* "Take, O take those lips away."

A few are more ambitious, like the dirge in *Cymbeline* over Imogen's body, with its resignation to death which comes to all, and finishes "joy and moan."

But the list is inexhaustible. Shakespeare's many songs cannot even be classified. Most of them were born of a particular occasion and are implanted in a scene whence they cannot be taken without injury—Desdemona's willow song, Ophelia's mad song, Iago's drinking song, the ironical snatches sung by the fool in *King Lear,* and the incantations of the witches in *Macbeth,* not to mention Falstaff's hummings and those of the gravedigger in *Hamlet,* or the sprightly airs of Pandarus with their evil reek.

These songs have been collected, even translated with some success, in a single volume,[1] but as a rule they are not intended to be separated from the scene in which they take flight. By themselves, they lose their atmosphere with their occasion. Many are frail as butterflies' wings, and at a touch the gold dust which is their sparkle falls away from them.

Their rhythm is as various as their meaning. Some are all rhythm, made, it would seem, for their air and refrain. They vanish at the attempt to wring sense from them, for instance "When that I was and a little tiny boy," the epilogue to *Twelfth Night.* The nimble versification is unfailingly marvellous. Every resource and variety of form is used—the eight- and six-syllabled iambic line, the seven-syllabled trochaic line, the anapæstic line, combinations of these metres, refrains which do not scan but which delight the ear, simple and double rhymes, the most various arrangements of echoing words. The law governing them cannot be specified, for almost each one has its distinct form, line or stanza. They are made for music, and their only rule is to fit the air with which, or for which, they have been created.

Shakespeare's contemporaries had not his varied wealth or his

[1] Into French, by Maurice Bouchor (1896).

realism, but they decorated their plays with songs as sweet and melodious as his, especially Thomas Dekker, the author of "Gold's the wind" and "Art thou poor," Beaumont and Fletcher with their "Lay a garland on my hearse," "Hence all you vain delights," and "Drink to-day and drown all sorrow," and Webster with his "Call for the Robin." Ben Jonson has many songs, a little classical in turn, scattered through his masques and comedies —"Queen and huntress," "Still to be neat," "Come, my Celia"— and the well-known "Drink to me only with thine eyes," which occurs not in a play, but in his collection *Under-Woods.*

The use of songs persisted on the stage until the last in date of the great dramatists, Shirley, who provides a magnificent specimen, "The glories of our blood and state." The Restoration did not break the tradition, and charming songs echo through Dryden's plays.

This rich age produced a lyricism which approximated to the popular ballad, as in Dryden's ode on Agincourt, and also little delicate poems worthy to figure in the Anthology. The transition from the one to the other was insensible. The total result was very English owing to the mastery acquired over words and sounds and owing to an indefinable valiancy of turn and expression. The aroma of antiquity and the scent of modernity were blended. Nothing else in all this wealth of literature is as essentially poetic. This is its delicate, swaying crest, its exquisite and supreme flower.

(*d*) THE SONNETEERS.[1]—The vogue of the sonnet in the Elizabethan age was as brief as it was intense. With few exceptions it was confined to the six years from 1591 to 1597, during which some twenty collections appeared one after another under the impulse given by Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella.* All these were of love sonnets, and some which are complimentary and dedicatory and are scattered through the books of the period should be added to them.

Nothing better shows in miniature the general characteristics of Elizabethan poetry, the mingling of the conventional and the independent, the imitated and the original, of which it is constituted. So great is the influence plainly exercised on the sonnets by Italy and France that recently, when the distinction between

[1] *Elizabethan Sonnets*, ed. Sidney Lee, 2 vols. (1904); Sidney Lee, *The French Renaissance in England* (1910).

the work of masters and pupils was overlooked, they were characterized as an artificial product. Undoubtedly to write a love sonnet after Petrarch is to Petrarchise, and all who wrote them subsequently to the great Italian are in some sort his disciples. But as much is true of any poet who casts his poetry, or simply his verse, in a mould already in use; yet no one refuses to acknowledge his originality if he produce a personal impression in the form which another has invented.

In spite of the sonnets of Wyatt and Surrey, the English had neglected this genre and had even forgotten the exact meaning of the word sonnet, applying it to lyrical effusions very various in form. Such was the current designation of the *Hecatompathia: or Passionate Centurie of Love,* which Thomas Watson brought out in 1582 and which is in reality made up of little poems of eighteen lines divided into three sestets. The young poet himself introduces them ingenuously as exercises in style having no correspondence with his own sentiments. They are paraphrases of the foreign Petrarchians without value beyond harmony of style. Watson penetrated the highly susceptible language with the images and the subtle turns of thought brought into favour by the continental sonneteers.

Many later writers of regular sonnets, or at least of poems of fourteen lines, did no more than Watson. The search for sources, so active in the last half-century, has discovered in Ronsard and Desportes and the minor and major Petrarchians of Italy the origin of many sonnets found in Henry Constable's *Diana,* Samuel Daniel's *Delia,* Thomas Lodge's *Phillis* and the like. These poets made many liberal translations; they are chiefly to be valued for their style, which sometimes, as with Daniel, is highly distinguished.

Daniel, the calmest and most temperate of the Elizabethans, the poet of rest, may be taken to typify the men who wrote sonnets to be in the fashion, without conviction and probably without a real mistress to sing. She whom he implores remains invisible, inaccessible, cold, unknown and absent. His sonnets are so many chill appeals to her pity and might well leave her unmoved. But Daniel has merits as a writer. The language of his sonnets is usually pure and their versification correct in spite of some hard elisions and forced epithets in the manner of du Bartas ("Muse-foe-Mars"). If they incline too much to rhetoric

they are clear and have unity; sometimes a pale ray of imagination is shed on them; and here and there a line or two have a true beauty which revives the reader ("O clear-eyed Rector of the holy hill").

Barnabe Barnes is the antithesis of Daniel. He is a frenzied poet, or at least it pleases him to assume airs of dementia, and he escapes servility by extravagance. There is a curious mixture of factitious delirium, obscure indecency and true verbal vigour in his collection *Parthenophil and Parthenophe*. We cannot tell whether this be a very young poet who dreams unchastely and is intoxicated by rhyme, or a man of vulgar mind who swaggers of set purpose. The content of his collection is curious to consider. Comparisons, epithets, mythology, obscenities, puns, parentheses, questions and, above all, apostrophes are heaped one upon another. We understand where we can, and probably there is not always any sense to be understood. The best lines occur in the madrigals which follow the sonnets and are of more worth than they.

On the whole, after the great sonneteers Sidney, Spenser and Shakespeare, it is Michael Drayton who bears reading best. His collection *Idea*, augmented in every new edition which appeared from 1594 to 1619, is a sort of encyclopædia in which all the familiar themes recur with others added to them. We do not know if his Idea represent one woman or several or none, if during the twenty-five years covered by the series the poet flitted from love to love or from fancy to fancy. While he hardly gives the impression of a true passion, shows little delicacy and is often vulgar, he yet is versatile and animated and more than once ingenious to the point of the fantastic. The taste for geography manifest in his long poem is betrayed in several of his best sonnets, for instance in the first, in which he represents himself as an adventurous seafarer who has sailed the perilous seas of love, and in the thirty-second and fifty-third, where all the rivers of England are humbled before that sweet stream Ankor on whose banks Idea dwells.

Another frequent characteristic of Drayton is his dramatic sense. His sonnets enclose on occasion small scenes, for instance the second, in which an inquiry into the murder of his heart is instituted, or the fifty-ninth, in which he and Love quote proverbs against each other. In this genre Drayton produced the most

dramatic of sonnets, his sixty-first, in which he bids his mistress a bitter farewell, promising to forget her for ever, and then suddenly, while he grasps her hand to take leave of her, addresses to her the words by which they will doubtless be reconciled.

On the whole, *Idea* is an easily, carelessly constructed work, lacking unity but in no way inert, and with a dash and a rude bravery of style which give it value.

The loss of all the collection we have just mentioned, and also of Fletcher's *Lycia,* Thomas Watson's *Teares of Fancy,* the unsigned *Zepheria,* Percy's *Cælia,* Willoughby's *Avisa,* the *Alcilia* of J. C., Griffin's *Fidessa,* Lynch's *Diella* and Smith's *Chloris* would hardly impoverish poetry. They may be summed up as imitations, if not mere translations, or else they are experiments in style and in conceits. But three works, signed by great names, are more beautiful than any of the others and bear many marks of sincerity, that is of a direct relation to life and their authors. They have suffered from mediocre neighbours, and their few inevitable, superficial resemblances to these have caused some recent critics to condemn them as tainted by the same unreality and produced by the same rhetoric. They are Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella,* Spenser's *Amoretti* and Shakespeare's *Sonnets.* That lofty and deep natures should have been superior to others even in sonnets is not surprising. It would seem that these true poets, with all the gamut of poetic forms at their disposal, had recourse to the sonnet when they wished to express their intimate feelings, and thus used it in conformity with its origin and for its proper purpose, not to make play with a fiction unconnected with their real life. The impression of sincerity is most simply explained by supposing that the writers were sincere, and it happens also that the few facts revealed by their sonnets are in strict agreement with the little known about their lives.

Is this to say that these sonneteers have not common ground with their forerunners? Far from it. They are like them by their exaltation, by the fact that for thousands of years lovers have repeated the same words and gestures and have sometimes been deceived into believing that they used them first. Moreover, all poets from the time of Petrarch shared an idealism which was their philosophy. Platonic thought, especially as it helped them to deify their mistress's beauty, make a virtue of their desire and assure eternal life at once to their verses and to the lady of their

choice, made its way into all their minds. This is not to say that they were, properly speaking, imitators, but that they lived in a common atmosphere.

Moreover, their wish to offer worthy jewels to the object of their love led all the sonneteers to refine alike, and sometimes, when the greatest of them dived for pearls, they brought up the gems they had admired in others. Yet not only in their imagination, but also in their passion, there is a vivifying and renewing force. Even their repetitions are spoken in a new voice which is their own. Neither Petrarch, nor Ronsard, nor the most famous of the Italian and French sonneteers, could take the place of these English sonneteers, Sidney, Spenser and Shakespeare. The individuality of a great sonneteer is as distinct as that of any other great writer. In him the part of convention is slight and transparent and his true figure shines through it.

We have already spoken of the sonnets of Sidney and Spenser which are at the very heart of their poetic work. Shakespeare's sonnets are in different case, for they were written in moments snatched from work for the theatre.[1] His unequal collection, spoilt in more than one place by excessive subtlety, stained by shadows which the most attentive searchlight has not entirely dissipated, is yet the casket which encloses the most precious pearls of Elizabethan lyricism, some of them unsurpassed by any lyricism. The formidable efforts to deduce the exact history of the poet's heart from his sonnets and the publisher's mysterious dedication, and the conflict of the theories resultant on this investigation, must not be allowed to conceal either the absolute beauty of the verses or the clear lines of the drama of feeling they trace. Shakespeare tells of his fervent love for a young man of high birth whose beauty and nobility he celebrates. He devotes himself to him whole-heartedly, finds in him his joy and his consolation for all the misery of life. He also expresses the agony of his love for a capricious and fickle married woman who deceives him with his friend. To that friend he is indulgent to the point of forgiveness, but for the woman he feels anger gradually increasing to hate.

The finest, most poignant and most passionate sonnets are those in which he gives himself, with all his love and his genius, to the young man who dazzles him even after he has been

[1] Doubtless between 1594 and 1602. Published 1609

betrayed by him. The profound pathos is thrown into relief by the rare beauty of the images and the style, and by the perfection of the versification, which has a subtle melody never to be surpassed. Music is not inherent in the pattern of the sonnet, or rather in the fourteen-lined poem, three quatrains with distinct rhymes followed by a distich, a form which is less expert than the Petrarchian. But its looseness is redeemed by the infinite care with which the poet caresses words and sounds. Only the best sonnets of Milton attain to the supreme beauty of the best written by Shakespeare, and their themes and effects are entirely other.

(c) EROTIC ITALIANISM. THE LICENTIOUS POETS.—Feared and denounced though it was by Puritans like Ascham, Italian voluptuousness was still seductive to poets. Its traces are everywhere, in the ardour of many sonnets and songs, in the warm colouring of more than one such historical picture as Drayton's *Barons' War,* and even in poems like Spenser's which have a very evident moral tendency. The most beautiful passages of the *Faerie Queene* are impregnated with it. Yet Spenser was tenaciously fighting the licentiousness of the Italian muse, and his work is justly renowned for its purity and lofty tone as compared with that of more than one of his great contemporaries who were still less impervious than he to the charms of the Mediterranean Circe. Marlowe and Shakespeare were among these. Under the influence of the verses and *novelle* of Italy, a sensual, lascivious poetry flourished in England, and was apt to provide libertine fine gentlemen and courtesans with their daily reading. These writings match the daring mythological paintings which the sixteenth-century artists alternated with religious pictures. The moralists had good cause to be scandalised when they listened to such stories as Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* or Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis,* not to mention John Marston's *Pigmalion* and other analogous productions of the time.

(1) MARLOWE'S "HERO AND LEANDER."—Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* [1] deserves careful study, not only for its real merit, but also for its great success in its author's generation and the praise, sometimes extravagant, given to it in our day.

[1] Written before 1593, when Marlowe died; not completed. Published in 1598 with Chapman's continuation, another edition in that year with a sequel by Petowe. See Chabalier, *Héro et Léandre* (Paris, 1911).

The English Renascence is here seen at work on a legend of antiquity and transforming it. The original poem was written by a fifth-century grammarian, Musæus, an Alexandrian satiated with complicated dishes who fell in love with simplicity and took to a milk diet. In spite of some inevitable mannerisms, Musæus wrote an exquisite poem, simple in outline, short and yet complete and harmonious, very pure although it celebrates ardent youthful love. In it Hero is the virgin suddenly awakened to love, Leander the adolescent overcome by his first passion. The idea of the final catastrophe broods over the whole work, imparting melancholy even to the description of the lovers' bliss. Marot followed the Greek poet exactly when he wished to relate the beautiful story to the French, adding only that seeming artlessness which his style communicates to all his subjects. There is in fact no better method.

But Marlowe did not wish to translate. His intention was to charge his plot with all the wealth of his imagination and to give rein also to satire and irony. The tragic end of the lovers did not keep him from making merry on his way to it; he respected neither the purity of the legend nor the character of the young lovers, ennobled by courage, trial and death. In Musæus the consummation of the love of Hero and Leander is simple and natural. Although there is no nuptial rite, there is no sin. But in Marlowe, the atheist and libertine, the idea of sin does not spring from piety, but is present because he uses his poem to run counter to the beliefs of his time and because it amuses him to defy the moral sense of those about him. The provocation has a racy turn and sometimes changes the pure story into a fabliau. Marlowe likes to unmask the unconscious hypocrisies of his hero, even more of his heroine, and there is a hint of satire against woman in his poem. It is in the spirit of the Middle Ages rather than of paganism. But paganism of the most scandalous kind, which he did not find in Musæus, is there also, an enthusiasm for manly beauty and the gratuitous introduction of forbidden practices into the tragic idyll. We are shown Neptune in love with handsome Leander and pursuing him beneath the waters. All this medley makes *Hero and Leander* a composite and barbarous work, and it is impossible to understand Swinburne's praise of it. "That poem stands out alone amid all the wide and wild poetic wealth of its teeming and turbulent age, as might a small

shrine of Parian sculpture amid the rank splendour of a tropic jungle."

Fundamentally nothing could be less Greek. Rather we have here an extravagant Ovid, a demoralised Spenser. Yet how restrained and classical the portrait of the Spenserian Belphebe seems beside Marlowe's heroine, dressed by his unbridled fancy as a young priestess of Venus! The strangeness of her clothing is extraordinary—her lawn mantle, "the lining purple silk, with gilt stars drawn," her wide green sleeves, her blood-stained blue kirtle, her myrtle wreath whence falls a veil of artificial flowers and leaves, her pebble necklace,

> Buskins of shells, all silver'd, usèd she,
> And branch'd with blushing coral to the knee;
> Where sparrows perch'd, of hollow pearl and gold,
> Such as the world would wonder to behold,
> Those with sweet water oft her handmaid fills,
> Which as she went, would cherup through their bills.

Besides all this prettiness there are conceits: the artificial flowers of the veil are so well imitated as to deceive, and men "praise the sweet smell as she past," and they feel the exhalations of her breath; bees also are taken in, seek honey in the veil, "and, beat from thence, have lighted there again." Even worse than all this are the red spots on Hero's skirt, "made with the blood of wretched lovers slain," doubtless for the sake of the amiable girl!

In manner Marlowe comes very near the prettiness and curiosities of *Arcadia*. Elsewhere, by the way he makes his hero and heroine think, act and speak, he recalls one of Chaucer's sprightly tales or he anticipates Swift's cynicism. But always there is an underlying sensuality derived from Ariosto or even from Aretino. It is painful to see this graceful and pure theme turned into a half-satirical, half-aphrodisiac tale. Marlowe's poem is astounding by the heavy and extravagant richness of its frame as by the highly flavoured coarseness of its details.

And yet it has merits which partly explain the dithyrambic praise accorded to it. It is the work of a true poet who overloads a story without stifling it, and brings into his narrative a beguiling vigour, a great writer of verse whose touch is sure and clear although he does not always keep free of the preciosity of his time, who handles words and images with surprising decision

and energy in a language which has withstood time better than that of any other man of his century. Moreover, Marlowe's irreverence is not uninterrupted; here and there he is unreservedly on the side of the lovers; he is capable of sincere passion as well as of cynicism. It was in one of his happy moments that he wrote his famous lines on love at first sight, "It lies not in our power to love or hate." The reader of *Hero and Leander* protests, but is vanquished all the same, and he ends lamenting that this poet was stopped in mid-career.

His talent shines luminously when his verses are compared with those of the poets who succeeded him, and not only those of the mediocre rhymester called Petowe, who seems to have been entirely ignorant of the Greek legend and who transformed *Hero and Leander* into a chivalrous romance. Petowe's Hero is loved by the king of her country, rejects him and is cast into prison, to stay there until a knight shall defend her honour victoriously in the lists. Leander, nameless and disguised, appears as her champion, triumphs and claims her, but she is faithful and refuses him until she sees his face, whereupon the two live happy ever after. There is here no plunge into the waters, no Hellespont, no tragedy.

But Marlowe's superiority is hardly less apparent when the sequel to his poem is read which was written by the over-learned George Chapman, afterwards famous for his translation of Homer. Chapman knew Greek and the original poem, but he is as far removed from Marlowe as Marlowe is from Musæus. He is the most unintelligible, the gloomiest and the foggiest of the Elizabethans, and thereto as much a moralist as Marlowe is a cynic. He makes the death of the lovers the punishment of their illicit love, and invents the heaviest machinery for the purpose, introducing endless new episodes into the restrained story. He fashions for Hero a new dress which makes Marlowe's seem simple. The scarf he gives her takes as long to describe as the shield of Achilles and bears stranger symbols. He cannot refrain from introducing a moral reflection into the smallest descriptive detail. If the waves buffet the swimmer's body, he says:

> And toss'd distress'd Leander, being in hell,
> As high as heaven: bliss not in height doth dwell.

In many places he touches the lowest depth of absurdity to

which the astonishingly unequal poetry of the Elizabethans could fall, one beneath any watery abyss into which poor Leander sank.

(2) SHAKESPEARE'S "VENUS AND ADONIS" (1593) AND THE "RAPE OF LUCRECE" (1594).—Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, which he calls "the first heir of my invention," was written at the same time as *Hero and Leander*. It was lovingly chiselled and was dedicated by the poet to the Earl of Southampton, his young and noble patron. Here again inspiration comes from a classical legend. Shakespeare has recourse to Ovid as Marlowe to Musæus; he too ministers to the taste for licentious pictures and enfranchises himself from the exigencies of drama in order to follow his fancy.

The story is well known. Venus falls in love with the young Adonis, who cares only for hunting, and rejects her. In spite of her he goes back to his sport, is killed by the wild boar which is his quarry and is metamorphosed into an anemone.

Shakespeare eliminates nearly all the mythology. A powerful instinct impels him towards reality. His goddess is a woman skilled at love-making and ravaged by passion, and in Adonis we already have the young sport-loving Englishman, annoyed and fretted by the enticements of a beautiful amorous courtesan whose sensuality is unbounded and who retains no prestige of divinity.

These realistic passions are framed by equally realistic pictures and episodes. The arguments of Venus are supported by the appearance of "a breeding jennet" rushing out of a neighbouring copse and at once joined by Adonis's steed, who breaks his rein in order to go to her. The horse is painted with dry precision, as by an expert. Further, the goddess vividly describes boar-hunting and hare-hunting to the youth, the one an over-dangerous sport whence she would dissuade him, the other a safe amusement which she recommends. These two specialised pictures are plainly drawn at first hand and from observation, and the most touching lines of the poem tell of the agony of the "timorous flying hare."

It is, however, impossible not to recognise that the dominant note is struck by the voluptuous painting of the goddess's lascivious gestures and the complacent retailing of her glowing words. Thus regarded, the poem is, from the merely artistic point of view, a complete success. Shakespeare gives evidence in its stanzas of astonishing linguistic wealth and skill. He too is

over-prone to conceits, but on the whole the critic has only to admire his masterliness.

Because he writes in stanzas, not, like Marlowe, in rhyming couplets, his poem has less the turn of a narrative than *Hero and Leander*. It is pre-eminently a series of pictures. If the licentiousness of the two poems is about equal, that of Shakespeare has the advantage of dealing with a mythological legend and staging a heroine neither of which could be much profaned. On the other hand, his eroticism is more elaborate and has less dash and spontaneity than that of his rival.

It seems to have been for an artistic purpose that Shakespeare in the following year chose the rape of Lucretia as the subject of a poem which forms at once a pendant and a contrast to the preceding one. Having painted the attempt of an amorous woman to seduce a youth, he proceeded to represent the rape of a chaste wife by a wretched debauchee.

The latter work shows increased power and breadth, but the old defects in strengthened form. The speeches are longer than ever and less appropriate—Lucrece's supplications to Tarquin before his crime, the endless plaints which intervene between the assault and the suicide of the outraged wife. The minute descriptions, with their prettiness and conceits, are especially irritating, veiling and enervating, as they do, the tragedy of the theme. In the portrait of Lucrece, asleep upon her bed as Tarquin draws her curtains, poetry and bad taste are inextricably mingled.

From end to end of the poem the reader is exasperated by the poet's very talent, his fancy and eloquence, and is brought to regret both Ovid's quieter picture and Chaucer's artless rendering thereof. He tells himself that the limits of the sonnet and restrictions of the theatre had the happy effect of setting bounds to the poet's exuberance. An aspect of Shakespeare is revealed which could not appear so clearly in his other works, but it is on the whole the less pure side of his genius, both morally and poetically.

The judgment of his contemporaries was other, and a large part of their eulogies of Shakespeare, as of Marlowe, refers to their voluptuous poems. These provoked such imitations as Marston's *Pigmalion*, written in the same spirit, and Francis Beaumont's *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, and they remained the most popular specimens of the poetry of questionable char-

this time received more enthusiastic praise. The grandeur of the subject, which was the creation of the world, made the productions of any less ambitious muse seem petty. The grandiloquence of du Bartas was taken for pure sublimity, and, far from shocking English taste, his constant lapses from the noble to the trivial, his eccentricities, his unsmiling puerility and his enormous long-winded bombast fell in with natural tendencies and satisfied them. The composite epithets, which soon made du Bartas ridiculous in France and strikingly proved him to be out of tune with the spirit of the French language, were fitted to English and easily acclimatised in England. Even in Elizabeth's reign the glory of du Bartas was known to everyone; it was acknowledged by Spenser as by Sidney, by Drayton as by Daniel. Not, indeed, until the reign of James I. did it reach its full height, and du Bartas won yet more tardily the most honourable of all his claims to fame, that of leading Milton to choose the sacred story of the fall of the angels and of the first man for his theme. But in the great void which stood for religious poetry at the end of the sixteenth century, the appearance of the English version of *La Semaine* was an even more impressive event. Protestantism, hitherto divorced from the Muses, conceived for the first time the idea of a high epic poetry based on the Bible. Religious men who had the taste for poetry, but were scandalised by the paganism of their contemporaries, found "verses which a girl could read without blushing."

> Des vers que sans rougir la vierge puisse lire.
> *La Semaine*, I. ii. line 30.

Even of Spenser, proselytise though he did on behalf of Protestantism and morality, this could not always be said. Du Bartas did not think it necessary to transpose the Bible into mythological pictures, but went straight to the Scriptures. He showed that a great and truly Christian poetry was possible, and the revelation constituted his glory, which was as brilliant as it was ephemeral.

(2) SIR JOHN DAVIES AND DAVIES OF HEREFORD.—Southwell in his ardent piety stands almost alone. Only a generation after him did the example of du Bartas give rise to a truly Christian poetry. But under Elizabeth some poets who had already come under his influence followed tendencies which, amid the preva-

lence of the fantastic, were markedly severe, even didactic. It is true that Spenser had built up his sensual visions behind a noble moral façade, and that Daniel's reflective muse was prone to a grave thoughtfulness, yet two men who in some sort specialised in philosophical poetry may be detached from their fellows.

Sir John Davies (1569-1626)[1] a lawyer who became a statesman, began by giving free rein to his capricious imagination in his *Orchestra, or a Poeme on Dancing* (1596), one of the most curious examples of the strange Elizabethan inventiveness. He represents Penelope as refusing to dance with the suitor Antinous, who thereupon proves to her that the exercise is both ancient and universal, since the elements and the heavenly bodies, involved in rhythmic movement, are so many dancers. On this curious theme the poet has many animated stanzas of which some attain to true poetry. Three years later, he produced a series of twenty-six hymns in acrostics to Astræa, or Elizabeth, which are full of go, and also a more serious poem on the immortality of the soul, *Nosce Teipsum* (1599), which very happily, in eloquent quatrains, reconciles imagination and logic. This poem was at the time the supreme attempt to reason in verse, for all that it did not quite escape infection from the reigning fantastic tendency. In this age of madrigals and pastorals it constitutes an anomaly.

Much more profusely, but with much less poetic swing, the Welsh poet and writing-master John Davies of Hereford (1565?-1618?),[2] almost the namesake of him whom we have just considered, wrote many poems on theological and philosophical subjects, the best known of them *Mirum in Modum* (1602), a dissertation on the glory of God and the form of the soul, and *Microcosmos* (1603), a description of the small world of man with instructions on the art of governing it. This is a vague metrical treatise on physiology and psychology. The writer continued to make verses until his death, sacred verses especially, but satires and epigrams intermingled with them. He had little poetry, but an unfailing and unmistakable edifying tendency.

(*g*) SATIRE.—In 1597 a young man who had just left the university wrote at the beginning of a collection of satires:

[1] Edited by Grosart, 3 vols. (1869-1876).
[2] Edited by Grosart, 2 vols. (1873).

I first adventure, with fool-hardy might,
To tread the steps of perilous despight:
I first adventure, follow me who list,
And be the second English satirist.

This was Joseph Hall (1574-1656)[1] and his arrogant announcement was a sign of presumption rather than knowledge. No one is ever the first. Without going back to *Piers Plowman,* we find that satire had flourished in various forms since the Renascence, in Skelton and Wyatt and more recently in George Gascoigne, the author of the *Steel Glass.* It had made use of doggerel, rhymed heroic verse and blank verse, in turn. Spenser had found ample space for it in more than one of his works, and had produced one very harsh satire, his *Mother Hubberd's Tale,* which is, on the whole, the most successful of this century. Thomas Lodge, a year before Hall, published *A Fig for Momus.* Since Hall was certainly not unaware of all these productions, he doubtless deemed that the name of satire should be reserved for imitations of the ancients, Horace, Persius or Juvenal, whom he himself followed closely. But while he is inspired by their form, the task he sets himself is fortunately that of chastising the society of his own time, and his *Virgidemiarum,* in six books, of which three were published in 1597 and three in 1598, contains a fair number of sketches of abiding interest because their subject is contemporary manners. The twenty-three-year-old poet naturally displays in his invectives against his times a supreme self-confidence. He boldly solves every moral problem, and speaks out loudly, comparing the ways of a past he does not know to those of the present. But not only has he a certain writing talent, comparative lucidity, skill in combining words, and the ability to express himself in a lively, striking way: he is also less inclined to vague declamation than his youth might warrant. He is concrete and picturesque. He attacks the extravagance of dress, describes the costume of a dandy, makes fun of a courtier whose wig has been blown away, and, like Portia in the *Merchant of Venice,* at much this time, paints the Englishman's jumbled costume to which every country had contributed Similarly he criticises the language of his day—

Bibinus self can have ten tongues in one,
Tho' in all ten not one good tongue alone—

[1] Complete poetical works edited by Grosart (1879)

and mocks the conceits of the sonneteers. Except for Spenser, to whom he finely renders homage, he sees in literature only the blameworthy, and like Spenser he actually, in this year of 1597, perceives only decline and barbarism in the drama. Yet there is both justice and point in his attack. He is especially indignant at the grandiloquence which Marlowe, author of *Tamburlaine,* had brought into the fashion:

> Then weeneth he his base drink-drowned spright
> Rapt in the threefold loft of Heaven's hight:
> When he conceives upon his faigned stage
> The stalking steps of his great personage
> Graced with huff-cap termes, and thundering threats,
> That his poor hearers hair quite upright sets.

As much of a classicist as Sidney, Hall protests against the buffoonery of the clowns introduced into tragedies and the consequent "goodlie hotch-potch."

Hall does not confine his strictures to literature. He draws a vigorous little picture of the hardships suffered by a tutor in a squire's household, inventing an advertisement in which all the services and compliances the squire expects of the poor man are enumerated.

> All these observ'd, he could contented be
> To give five markes, and winter liverie,

it concludes.

The Church soon robbed letters of this young and most promising satirist. Hall became a bishop, and it is remarkable that the other satirists of the period also ended as clergy, just as in France Régnier became canon of Chartres.

Such was the fate of John Marston (1575-1634),[1] the most cynical of the Elizabethan authors, whose first efforts were the licentious poem *The Metamorphosis of Pigmalions Image and Certaine Satyres,* most of them collected in *The Scourge of Villanie* (1598). Marston was attacked for the immorality of his *Pigmalion,* and defended himself by stating that he wrote it to ridicule the fashionable licentious paintings. The sincerity of the defence is doubtful and the same doubt attaches to all this poet's satires. Under the pretence of teaching morals, Marston allows himself to go to the extreme of coarseness both in subject and in language. He is certainly more virulent than Hall, but he is also

[1] Complete edition by Bullen, 3 vols. (1885).

more declamatory and much less accurate. In his writing there is hardly anything representative of the period. His pedantry is as excessive as his cynicism. On the whole, he is most remarkable for his gift of words. His lungs are strong and insults spring plentifully to his lips, as he ploughs up

> The hidden entrailes of ranke villanie,
> Tearing the vaile from damn'd impietie.
> Quake guzzell dogs, that live on putrid slime,
> Skud from the lashes of my yerking rime.

Here and there, amid this emphatic flow of words, something or someone is more exactly delineated, for instance the amateur of the theatre whose criticism, like the speech of Shakespeare's Pistol, is all in the verbiage of tragedies. It is also permissible to believe that under the Latin names of his characters Marston is aiming at contemporaries, that Tubrio stands for Marlowe. But generalities prevail and identifications are difficult.

At the same time as Hall and Marston, if not a little before them, John Donne (1573-1631)[1] as early as 1593 composed his first satires. The later dean of St. Paul's was then writing satiric and erotic poetry in turns. But his early verses did not appear until 1633, after his death. By reason of his extreme youth he could not be a very profound moralist, and his satires were mainly literary exercises in which, however, his originality and his fantastic bent were already apparent. Yet more impregnated than Hall with literary reminiscences, he desired to restore to the satire the rude versification used by the Romans. A precocious taste for the obscure led him to prefer Persius, who is his favourite model.

Never has English metre, the heroic metre, suffered as at his hands. He wrote so-called couplets, but allowed himself to drag the sense from one line to the next in the most violent way and to make the most singular divisions of his line. More than this, he violates the iambic rhythm over and over again and many of his lines cannot be scanned.

> If all things be in all,
> As I think, since all which were, are and shall
> Be, be made of the same elements,
> Each thing each thing implies or represents.

[1] Complete edition of Donne's poems by H. J. C. Grierson, 2 vols (1912).

When he rhymes unaccented syllables—officèrs, suitòrs—the fact may be ascribed to archaism, but with little probability, since he aimed at modernism and a reproduction of the inflections of everyday speech. It is rather that he despised the laws of versification.

As for his subjects, they are traditional but reanimated by observation and by something pointed and unexpected in the way they are handled. He resumes Horace's theme of the importunate bore and that of the snob who disturbs the poet at his books and drags him out into the street where repeatedly he leaves him in order to greet some important personage.

The poet's subtle and metaphysical imagination was already finding vent, as in the satire which exposes the wretchedness of courtiers and litigators. Magistrates are the sea in which all streams lose themselves, litigators these streams which feed this sea. The queen can do nothing in the matter: she is like the calm source of the Thames, ignorant who owns the meadows flooded by its branches or the cornfields its waters inundate.

> O age of rusty iron! Some better wit
> Call it some worse name, if ought equal it,
> Th' iron age was, when justice was sold; now
> Injustice is sold dearer far.

With Marston and Hall, Donne represents classical Elizabethan satire. This was, however, only a small part of the satirical poetry of the period. The spirit of satire was more abundantly manifest outside the regular forms. The prose of such as Nashe, the "English Juvenal," is nothing but long, droll, Rabelaisian satire. It was, however, especially under James I. that satire ceased to be merely literary, and became the sincere and vehement expression of a pessimism which was often painful. Pure satire became frequent on the stage, not only in Ben Jonson's plays, but also in those of most of his contemporaries, not excepting Shakespeare, whose *Hamlet, King Lear, Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens* have many touches and even whole passages in the tone of bitter invective. All the dramatists mockingly or indignantly denounce vice, at least intermittently. Sometimes they inveigh against the society of their day, sometimes against mankind itself.

2. *Poetry under James I.* (1603-25).—There is something arbitrary in a separation of the poetry of Elizabeth and of

James I. The division must be understood to be convenient rather than anything else, a device to assist the chronology of literary history. The poets who wrote as much in one reign as the other are numerous—Shakespeare, Daniel, Drayton, Chapman and others, and to attribute much importance to the change of sovereign would be puerile. Yet the division has the advantage that it marks an evolution which, in spite of many exceptions, caused the first two decades of the seventeenth to differ from the last two of the sixteenth century.

Elizabeth's reign has the glory of youth and growth, of national expansion and patriotic faith. The whole of literature is lit up by the victory over the Armada. Even the bitterest satires and the gloomiest pages written have a spontaneity and dash which are near to joy. We feel the intense enjoyment of the poet who is adventuring into new paths, his delight with his own creations. He derives from life, from the things he sees and from the current ideas, a pleasure perpetually renewed. He is intoxicated with the novelty of his metres and the freshness of his vocabulary. If he be Spenser he writes *Hymnes in honour of Love and Beautie;* if Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great;* if Shakespeare's, *Love's Labour's Lost* or *Midsummer Night's Dream.* He has neither morals nor religion for his main objects, except such a façade as Spenser affixed to the *Faerie Queene.* Pessimism exists for him only superficially or momentarily, a cloudy sky through which the sun is about to break.

Was it the effect of the vain attempt of Essex at a revolution which would have overthrown the old queen's unpopular counsellors? Was it the disillusionment of the dull reign of James I., when England withdrew into herself and the great hopes of expansion were frustrated? Or was it merely the weariness which followed on the long previous lyrical exaltation? Whatever were the causes, life came to seem sad, human nature perverse, society vitiated. Shakespeare wrote violent, poignant tragedies and comedies hardly less bitter. A harsh or cynical realism succeeded to the transports of former days, to the flights into ideal spheres.

Poetry had grown self-conscious; the earlier ardours and easy enjoyment of colours and words now were on the wane. Poets readily became more moral or religious, sometimes more didactic. A general more sombre or more melancholy hue was diffused over

letters. While literature acquired more substance it became less capable of facile, light-hearted joy. Poetry was already a little under the shadow of the approaching great civil conflict, of the strengthened and menacing Puritanism. If it were permissible to assign an age to two succeeding generations, we would say that the second was nearer middle life than the first. Even such of its poets as reverted to the Elizabethan manner had lost the first freshness of invention; they were merely in the sequence.

(*a*) GEORGE WITHER.[1]—At the very end of Elizabeth's reign and under James I. several poets flourished who are variously interesting, some who had received an impulse from their predecessors and others who adventured in new paths.

George Wither, William Browne, the two brothers Giles and Phineas Fletcher and Drummond of Hawthornden may be cited as in the succession of Spenser. The spirit of the pastoral or the allegory or the refinement of the sonneteers dominates their work.

George Wither (1588-1667), the Puritan satirist, a voluminous writer, lived to see the Restoration, but all of his verses which deserve to survive were published before 1622. The son of a Hampshire country gentleman, he was educated by the rector of the parish, and his early home gave him a strong taste for the country and a love of solitary independence. His poems, which are often autobiographical, describe his rustic, unsophisticated youth. When he reached the court of James I., at the age of eighteen, he was scandalised by the lying and the licence he found there, and he satirised the court in his *Abuses stript and whipt* which appeared in 1613. The satire is general, without personal attacks, but it caused such displeasure that Wither was imprisoned in the Marshalsea. He was there for several months, and there wrote one of his most charming poems, the *Shepherd's Hunting,* published in 1615. It is a sort of pastoral in the form of a dialogue between Willy, who represents the poet William Browne, and Philarete, the friend of virtue, otherwise Wither himself. In the most famous passage the prisoner Philarete encourages Willy to resume his interrupted pastoral songs, describing to him how he beguiles his own captivity with the help of his Muse, who shows him how to enjoy in memory the natural beauty from which he is debarred. It is here that an outburst of gratitude to Nature

[1] His poems have been edited by H. Morley (1891).

occurs which at this date is surprising, one which contains all Wordsworth in germ:

> In my former dayes of blisse,
> Her divine skill taught me this,
> That from every thing I saw,
> I could some invention draw:
> And raise pleasure to her height
> Through the meanest objects sight;
> By the murmure of a spring,
> Or the least boughs rusteling,
> By a dazie whose leaves spred,
> Shut when Tytan goes to bed,
> Or a shady bush or tree,
> She could more infuse in mee,
> Then all natures beauties can,
> In some other wiser man.

The other poems of Wither's youth are inspired by the same spirit, for instance his *Fidelia*, an elegy of love, which was followed by love songs. The satirist, who was soon to be a determined Puritan, appears in one song as a boon companion who refuses to waste himself in despair for a woman who scorns him. In *Faire-Virtue, the Mistress of Phil'Arete*, which he wrote in 1622, Wither perhaps reached his highest accomplishment, but unfortunately his prolixity and the common and heavy character of his moralising had increased, and the collection is only intermittently of value. The song of the *Constant Shepherd* is a farewell to the sirens whom the poet rejects for virtue. Yet he is still capable of enjoying the pleasures of an honest life. In a Christmas song his unconquerable love for the traditions of jollity breaks out, and he writes one of the lustiest of the poems inspired by the roast-turkey season, one full of homely merriment. With its refrain, "And let us be merry," it exhales the mirth of pagan rather than Christian festivities and heralds, two centuries in advance, the Dickens Christmas. It has Dickens's sentimental joviality, for Wither too remembers the unfortunate who receive a generous pittance on this day of feasting.

It is disconcerting to discover this mood in a Puritan, simultaneously author of *Wither's Motto* (1621), which earned him not only renewed imprisonment in the Marshalsea, but also punishment from Ben Jonson, who in *Chronomastix* defended his times against this reviler. Henceforward Wither, once a writer

of gentle pastorals, gave himself up to the composition of satires in which elements of exaltation and mysticism are mingled. He became one of the prophets of the Revolution, the typical Puritan scribbler, and thus exposed himself to the ridicule of Cleveland and Butler, producing such rubbish that Pope calls him "wretched Wither" and instances him as the type of a bad poet.

Wither's merits were not only distinct from his Puritanism, but in direct conflict with it. Only his youthful verses, of which some are charming, count at all. But even in them he is unequal; his best passages occur among platitudes. He is too apt to improvise, to abuse the dangerous easiness of the line of four accents. His is work which cries out for the selector.

(b) WILLIAM BROWNE.[1]—William Browne (1591-1643), the friend of Wither's youth, confined himself strictly to the pastoral. His *Britannia's Pastorals* has, by reason of its extent and patriotic title, made him something like the classical representative of pastoral poetry in his country.

He was inspired by Spenser's *Calendar,* especially for his *Shepheard's Pipe* (1614), which is a series of eclogues, serious or homely by turns. In *Britannia's Pastorals,* of which the first book appeared in 1613, the second in 1616, while the third remained in manuscript until 1852, he was undoubtedly under Spenser's influence, but Sidney's *Arcadia* was his chief model. Unfortunately he imitated too closely the confusion of plots in the great romance and the entangled adventures which form the web of his poem cannot be resumed. The principal thread is supplied by the story of the love of Celandine and Marina. Celandine becomes indifferent to Marina, who has given him her heart too quickly. She wishes to drown herself, but is saved by the river-god, who carries her off to Mona, where she is imprisoned in a cave by the monster Limos, or Hunger. From the time he loses her Celandine again loves her, searches Fairyland for her, and there finds Spenser asleep. The poem stops before Celandine's adventures are concluded.

Many other stories, nearly as long, fill the poem, which is half allegory and half mythology. Its subject is, however, of secondary importance. Its charm is constituted by a wandering

[1] Complete edition by W. C. Hazlitt (1868). Poems ed. by G. Goodwin (The Muses' Library, 2 vols., 1894). See F. W. Moorman, *William Browne: His Britannia's Pastorals;* E. Gosse, *The Jacobean Poets* (1899).

fancy. It must be read, like the *Faerie Queene*, in a leisurely way, and also with indulgence for the young poet's numerous faults, his inequalities as he constantly lapses from poetry to flatness, his too heavy decoration as he strings pompous similes together and thus interrupts his narrative, his conceits, his facetiousness which does not stop short of punning, and his composite epithets after the manner of du Bartas.

Yet Browne has interesting characteristics, distinct from those of his models. His poem is written in couplets which often have a distinctly classical air, the lines marching two by two, and having an epigrammatic or proverbial turn. And the couplets are not seldom interrupted to make way for graceful songs and touching elegies.

One of the attractions of the poem is its evidence of Browne's love for his own county of Devon, his pride in its glory as the nursery of seafaring adventurers and his intimate knowledge of its natural features and local customs. Although he was beguiled into factitious and romantic pastoral poetry, Browne was capable of seeing Nature as she is, and sometimes he painted her successfully. He could make English birds sing in concert, and he could bring a hunt to life or depict an effect of the dawn in a village.

Always he is cheerful. He enjoyed writing verses. He had youth and he wrote from the heart.

His *Pastorals* are certainly no masterpiece. He is a richer and less correct Racan who occupies an honourable place below the great.

(c) PHINEAS FLETCHER.—The influence of Spenser on Phineas Fletcher (1582-1650),[1] the incumbent of a small Norfolk parish, was yet more marked. Although his poems did not appear until 1631 and 1633, they were written much earlier, for he calls them "these rawe Essayes of my very unripe years, and almost childehood" They probably date from his undergraduate days at Cambridge.

His *Piscatorie Eclogs* are original only in substituting fishermen for shepherds. He changes only the accessories of the *Shepheard's Calendar*, and, like the Spenserian shepherds, his fishermen alternately converse of love and of religion. His reputation rests on the *Purple Island, or the Isle of Man*, a long allegory of which the elements are derived both from Spenser

[1] Giles and Phineas Fletcher, *Poetical Works*, ed. Boas, 2 vols. (1908-9).

and from du Bartas. The Huguenot poet whom William Browne had already celebrated had no greater admirer than Phineas Fletcher, who acknowledged him as his master:

> And that French Muse's eagle eye and wing
> Hath soar'd to heav'n, and there hath learn'd the art
> To frame Angelick strains, and canzons sing
> Too high and deep for every shallow heart.

This unfortunate love for a pseudo-great poet led Phineas Fletcher into many extravagances. The presentment of his allegory is clumsy to the point of being ridiculous. The allegory itself, in which the island, with its hills, rivers and woods, represents the human body, is like a disguised lesson in physiology. The author attempts to be at once technical and poetic, and finds himself obliged to explain his verses by numerous long footnotes. He is fairly well informed on anatomy, but is unaware of Harvey's discoveries about the circulation of the blood, and considers flesh to be blood badly dried. His mistakes are, however, less regrettable than his method. In his exposition of the structure of the body he repeats Drayton's unhappy attempt to versify geography. The feat is something like that of the descriptive writers of the eighteenth century—Pope analysing a game of ombre or Delille a game of chess. Each organ is personified: Hepar is the liver, Koilia the stomach, Splenion the spleen, Visus the eye, Gustus the taste, whose wife is the garrulous Lingua, and so forth. These faculties are served by grooms corresponding to the secondary organs, the muscles or nerves. They live in the valleys, on the hills or in the towns.

All this part of the poem is a paraphrase of the description of the Castle of Alma in Book II. (Cantos 9-11) of the *Faerie Queene*, with the difference that Fletcher, in his desire to be scientific and technical, obscures the Spenserian symbolism. Spenser's stanzas xxi. to xxxiv. are interminably dragged out in Fletcher's first five cantos. From a hundred lines he draws fifteen hundred. Nothing shows better than a comparison between the two works Spenser's real genius, very great even in the passages of his poem which are least calculated to please to-day. His long-windedness appears as brevity, his strangeness as good taste and classical judgment.

In the moral part of his allegory, in which he is more at his

ease, Fletcher is still the disciple of Spenser who showed the Castle of Alma or the Soul attacked by the vices and sins. Similarly Fletcher paints battles between the vices and the virtues, the latter led by Eclecta, or the Church. He relates them in chivalrous language as knightly conflicts. Eclecta is a more visibly Christian Belphebe or Britomart. The historical allusions and the flattery also recall the *Faerie Queene*: the angel who comes from Heaven to save Eclecta is King James I.

Yet Spenser's pupil is distinguished from his master by his greater religious fervour and by his literary form—the lighter stanza, the quickened movement, the more modern style, the total absence of archaism.

In spite of all his strange inventions and scientific velleities, this is a true poet. His images drawn from nature have no great rarity, but their grace and liveliness are their own. There is a ring in the stanzas which describe the joys of the Church reunited to good, to Christ and to God, and in the dialogue between husband and wife and the picture of their paradisial joys.

Fletcher is in some sort the connecting-link between the poet of the *Faerie Queene* and Bunyan, who described Mansoul.

(*d*) Giles Fletcher.[1]—The poetry of Giles Fletcher (1588?-1623), also a country clergyman, was, even more than his brother's, marked by religious fervour, and bore witness to the renewal of faith and mysticism which was soon to affect many of the Anglican clergy, so aptly reprehended by Spenser for inertia and indifference. Giles Fletcher's chief poem, and almost his only one, is *Christs Victorie and Triumph* which was published in 1610. It is a young man's work and shows signs of immaturity, but exuberance and a wealth and freshness of imagination more than redeem its faults. It forms a link between Spenser and Milton, between the first two books of the *Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Regained*. Its subject is that of Milton's poem and is treated in the Spenserian manner: Christ's life on earth, His mission of mercy, His struggle against Satan who tempts Him, His final victory and the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem. Like his brother Phineas, Giles acknowledges Spenser and du Bartas as his masters, calling the latter "Bartas, my sacred Sovereign," and numbering him among "the miracles of our latter age." He

[1] Edited by Grosart for the Fuller Worthies Library in 1868 and for the Early English Poets Series in 1876. See also last note.

is haunted by the *Semaine,* which had lately been translated by Sylvester (1605-6). As du Bartas inspires his subject, so he takes his style and his versification from Spenser. His stanza is Spenser's shorn of one line, and in his style there is Spenser's harmony and redundancy, together with an overweight of flowers and epithets, and also an inclination to antithesis unknown to his master.

There is greatness in the opening stanzas, the debate between Justice and Mercy, who in turn plead before God. The Creator is finally moved by Mercy, and the triumph of Christ in Heaven is thus signified.

His triumph upon earth ensues. In the desert He resists all the temptations of the Evil One—despair, presumption, vain-glory, voluptuousness, pride and covetousness. He passes through the same trials as Spenser's Sir Guyon.

There follows Christ's triumph over death in a picture of the Passion, and His triumph after death portrayed in a fervent hymn, an ecstatic description of earthly joys and regenerate man after the resurrection of the Saviour, and a final picture of the felicity of the blessed written in a spirit of exaltation. Except some of Shelley's visions, there is perhaps, in English, no other such rapturous description of Paradise. Milton is too restrained, too severe and too classical for such effects. Bunyan's heavenly Jerusalem repeats the Apocalypse too literally. Moreover, the faith of these great Puritans was too exclusive and individual. More than they, Giles Fletcher aspired to the felicity of all good Christians; he has more unction; the spirit of the Gospels is his supreme guide, and he seems to be unaware of the rigours and the terrors of the Old Testament. For all his striking youthful defects, he has an honourable place among the religious poets of England. Religion was to him the source not of wearing scruples or of fears, but of beatific visions.

(*e*) DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN.[1]—William Drummond of Hawthornden (1585-1649) has a place among Spenser's successors for different reasons than Phineas Fletcher.

This Scot, who wrote the purest English, was a great man of letters, knowing the literature and the languages of the moderns as of the ancients. He was especially susceptible to the Italian

[1] Ed. Ward, for the Muses' Library, 2 vols. (1894), Fréchette (1912) and Kastner, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1913).

influence. While his poetry is full of reminiscences, it is marked by a suave, slightly melancholy tone which makes it personal. It consists mainly of the book of poems published in 1616, a long panegyric on James VI. on the occasion of his visit to his native country, entitled the *River of Forth Feasting* (1617), and a collection published in 1623 and called *Flowers of Sion*. The poet's talent is best revealed in his sonnets, which are Italian in form, save that they end with an epigrammatic couplet. His sincere love for Nature is apparent through his sonneteer's conventions and his reminiscences. Living far from the centre of English literature, he pursued the sonnet when in England its popularity was on the wane and it was no longer methodically used by poets.

(*f*) Ben Jonson.[1]—In contrast to the poets just reviewed, who followed beaten tracks, we have two who were pioneers, Ben Jonson and John Donne. It was they whose influence was felt by the greatest number of their countrymen down to the Restoration.

Although Ben Jonson was first of all a dramatist, his poetic work, other than dramatic, is of fairly considerable extent. It consists of short pieces, written throughout his life, which appeared in three collections, *Epigrammes* and *The Forrest*, published together in the folio of 1616, and *Under-Woods*, published in the folio of 1641, after his death. No weight should be attached to the difference of titles, which implies no real difference of subject. All the collections are of detached poems. Complimentary verses as well as satirical quatrains are included with the *Epigrammes*, and *Under-Woods* contains poems longer than *The Forrest*, a word which merely translates the Latin form *silva*. These two or three hundred little sets of verses may well be considered in accordance with their character, irrespectively of the collection in which each occurs.

As is to be expected, the spirit of satire looms large in them. Side by side with the true epigrams, two or four lines long, sensible rather than biting and somewhat lacking in pointedness, Jonson presents us with a fair number of little sarcastic portraits in ten or twenty lines, not unlike the "humorous" characters so

[1] Ed. by Gifford (1816), and revised by Cunningham, 3 vols. (1871), 9 vols. (1875; the poetry is in vol. iii of this edition). For studies on Ben Jonson's poetry see E. Gosse, *The Jacobean Poets* (1889); Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson* (1889); and M. Castelain, *Ben Jonson, l'Homme et l'Œuvre* (1907).

plentiful in his comedies. Some types are skilfully pilloried: the reformed gamester taught wisdom by a beating; Shift, the retired lieutenant, cadging on the citizens and answering every inquiry with "God payes"; Don Surly, who gives himself importance by an affectation of haughtiness, a pretence of disdain, a display of sarcasm and an abundance of oaths; and

Poor Poet-ape, that would be thought our chiefe,

who "takes up all, makes each man's wit his owne," and in whom some have believed they saw an offensive picture of Shakespeare.

Ben Jonson also wrote moral satires which were on a larger scale and were nobler in tone and more sincere in expression than those of Hall and Marston. His epistle to Sir Edward Sackville inveighs successfully against patrons who grant their favours arrogantly, generally to the undeserving, and who are well paid out when they reap ingratitude.

Yet more lively is his epistle to a friend, Master Colby, to persuade him to go to the wars. He advises him to flee a town where men, in the leisure of peace, lead a shameful life, and to seek the camp. It is in such poems that Jonson's personality best appears, his blunt frankness which expressed itself in harsh versification, strong rather than harmonious.

But there is more than satire in the collections. They include many complimentary lines to the contemporary writers who were the poet's friends, if not his rivals—Bacon, Camden, Drayton, Chapman, Donne, William Browne, Sylvester, Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher, Shakespeare. The verses in honour of Shakespeare, inserted at the beginning of the works of this rival, are very beautiful. While Shakespeare lived, Ben Jonson's relations with him seem to have been cordial and hostile by turns, but after his death any jealousy or animosity he may have felt for him was effaced, and there remained an enthusiastic, moving admiration which produced the first unreserved and worthy celebration of his greatness.

Ben Jonson's praise was not always either as just or as fitly bestowed. Yet, when the hyperbolical flattery usual in his day is remembered, it is rather the manliness of his address to his patrons which is striking. His verses to the Sidney family and to the poet's sister, the Countess of Pembroke, are no mere

sycophantic eulogy. He has fine verses on Penshurst, Sir Philip Sidney's birthplace where he had himself received hospitality, on its amenities and charms and especially on the rustic simplicity and patriarchal virtue it sheltered. This poem is far superior to his long, elaborately staged compositions, whether odes or epithalamiums, which must be regarded mainly as literary exercises in the manner of the ancients. He was the first Englishman to write Pindaric odes, with strophe, antistrophe and epode, and the experiment cannot be called a happy one. Its artifice is too apparent and the author has not the qualities which make great lyricism.

Like the poets of the French Pleiad, Jonson was more successful in his imitations of the Greek Anthology, writing beautiful elegies and, in particular, touching and noble epitaphs. In this genre he was surpassed only by Herrick, his disciple.

Love figures in his collections, but merely, it would seem, as a literary theme. The *Celebration of Charis,* which he says he wrote at fifty years of age, is very fanciful and lively, and, of the ten poems which compose it, the fourth is in stanzas of a rare and truly lyrical pattern. In general, however, his love pieces reproduce poems of antiquity. The learned Ben Jonson translated more than he invented.

His work, taken together, offers some general characteristics. He was the most learned and the most convinced of the humanists of his generation. Until Milton he was. with his unmatched knowledge of Greek and even greater knowledge of Latin, first among them. He was little influenced by French or Italian literature, being ill acquainted with these languages, and he had not Spenser's sympathy with the Middle Ages. His culture was fundamentally Latin. The Latin muse appealed to his robust *genius, with its desire for energy and tendency to moralise.* It certainly was not through him alone, but it was principally through his means, that Neo-classicism was introduced into English poetry in the seventeenth century. He makes us feel that we are on the road to Dryden.

It is, however, his second characteristic that his personality is not stifled by his Latin livery. On the contrary, it shows itself very openly. Ben Jonson was a glorious egoist, very strongly individualised, with fixed ideas which he asserted arrogantly. His pride, his contempt for ignorance and hypocrisy, his love of

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frankness and loyalty, his straightness, the manly affection of which he was capable: all these are manifest in his verses.

He was without certain gifts—spontaneity and fancy. His style inclines to the abstract and lacks imagery. His metres are varied, but his rhythm is not pliable. There are many hard constructions in his verses, and Dryden called his translations "jaw-breaking." But he contributed to the poetry of his country some qualities in which it was then defective: he aimed at putting much meaning into the metrical line and his composition tended to be consecutive and regular. He subordinated fire and dash to logic. He taught soundness, reflection, self-control.

This was why in the latter part of his life, and especially after 1620, many admirers and disciples were grouped about him. He spoke as a master who knew the law, and many listened. He was the central poet, king of the taverns frequented by poets. Beaumont and Herrick have sung "those lyric feasts" where "rare Ben Jonson" was king. He had his "sons," and to be of "the tribe of Ben" was glorious. Following his example, poets cultivated the epigram, rifled the Greek Anthology and impregnated themselves with classicism. His influence lasted throughout the century, but was crossed and opposed by that of his friend John Donne.

(g) JOHN DONNE.[1]—John Donne (1573-1631), who, after a secular youth, took orders at the age of forty-three, in 1615, and ended as dean of St. Paul's, is perhaps the most singular of English poets. His verses offer examples of everything castigated by classical writers as bad taste and eccentricity, all pushed to such an extreme that the critic's head swims as he condemns.

Donne was a precocious poet who began to make rhymes about 1593 and had written many of his best poems before he was twenty-five. He would therefore be, in the strict sense, an Elizabethan, were it not that his poems, with a few exceptions, were not published until after his death in 1633. They were read in literary circles before they were printed, but they exercised their large and curious influence after their appearance in book form.

At the outset of Donne's career Spenser had already won his

[1] Complete edition of his poems by Grierson, 2 vols. (1912). Edited by Bullen for the Muses' Library (1901). *Life and Letters*, ed. by Edmund Gosse, 2 vols. (1909). Life in *I. Walton's Lives*, ed. Morley (1888). See also M. P. Ramsay, *Les Doctrines médiévales chez Donne* (Oxford, 1916).



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glory, and the Petrarchian sonneteers were producing collection upon collection. The independent young poet reacted against these schools. He found pastoral poetry, mythology, the allegory, Platonism, the taste for platitudes and for copious and facile description in the fashion. He despised convention and the morals of chivalry, as he despised highly regular metres and monotonous and harmonious cadences. His violation of rhythm in his *Satires* has already been mentioned. Some of it subsists in his *Songs and Sonnets* and his *Elegies*. His friend and admirer Ben Jonson said of him that he esteemed him "the first poet in the world for some things," but also that "Donne, for not keeping of accent, deserved hanging." Closely examined, this crime, for such it is, derives from his subordination of melody to meaning, his refusal to submit to the reigning hierarchy of words, sometimes from his lapses to the expressive spoken tongue, in defiance of the convention of poetic rhythm. He introduces into rhymed verse such bold innovations as were customary in the blank verse of the dramatists:

When thou knewst *what* I dreamt, when thou knewst *when*.

To smoothly flowing lines he often prefers those, freely divided, in which the accents have an effect of shock, pull the reader up and awaken his attention.

His style is analogous. He will have nothing to do with the easy and familiar, the mythological imagery; he turns out the company of the gods and goddesses and rejects the spoils of Greek and Latin poetry. His horror for the commonplace amounts to a cult of the eccentric. At the risk of being enigmatic, he takes pleasure only in the subtle. His sonnets, often such not in structure but merely in name, are akin by their subtlety to the most subtle of those which Shakespeare was writing at this time, but go far beyond them in this quality. Passion, feeling, sensuousness: all are subjected to wit. This play of wit sometimes results in astounding hyperbole: Donne excuses himself for mistaking his mistress for an angel on the ground that to imagine her other than she is would be profane. Or he incongruously brings together ideas as remote from each other as the antipodes, mingling the lofty and the mean, the sublime and the trivial. He deduces every kind of consequence from the fact that a flea hops from biting him to suck his mistress's blood. He will not

let her kill this creature in which their blood has mingled, and which is therefore their bridal bed, the temple of their wedding.

In such passages Donne lapses to the ridiculous, or rather he is saved the fall by his consciousness that he is playing with his theme and his amusement at his own extravagance. More often the fantastic is combined in him with passion, a strange compound, and he writes short, disconcerting, unique poems, some with a dramatic turn, which presage Browning two centuries in advance. He suggests scenes: bit by bit, by means of scattered indications of surroundings, movements and gestures, a scene is half discerned. The *Dream* is such a poem.

He has sudden impulses of thought which react strangely, sometimes advantageously, from the restricted modulations of the madrigal makers, for instance the opening lines of his *Good Morrow:*

> I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
> Did, till we lov'd?

At the beginning of *Canonisation* this abruptness is mingled with a piquant discourtesy to a friend who would deter him from love:

> For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love.

The inverse of the Petrarchians, Donne generally rejects the lofty cult of woman, towards whom he is highly ironical. His *Elegies* realistically relate more than one nocturnal adventure, akin, but for their tone, to the fabliaux (the *Perfume* and others). The women to whom he writes his first verses are without virtue or faith.

When a woman seems worthy to inspire a passion, Donne holds Platonic love to be a lure, or seeks, with subtle sophistry, to change it to its contrary. With what insidious arguments would he persuade his love to give herself to him entirely! His most beautiful poem is perhaps his *Ecstasy*, in which, when he has long adored his beloved, dumb and motionless, their hands and eyes meeting, he begs that their passion may have its fleshly consummation. Their two hearts are melted into one. They feel that they have become pure spirits. From this height at which they plane how little does the body matter! Poor body, which yet deserves its reward for having brought them together! To remember it is only just,

But, O, alas! so long, so far
Our bodies why do we forbear?
They are ours, though not we . . .

Although Donne's love is always profoundly sensuous, it is sometimes expressed with singular force and grandeur. The thought of death ennobles it. In the *Anniversary* he sees it persisting even in the grave. In the *Relique* he imagines himself dead and beneath the soil. His grave is opened to admit the body of another and on his wrist the gravedigger finds

A bracelet of bright hair about the bone.

Henceforth both of them, because of their great love, will be honoured like saints:

All women shall adore us, and some men.

Thus everything in Donne's early poems is in revolt against the poetic canons of the age. Their wit is indeed by itself no novelty. Wit—and conceits—abound in Sidney and in Shakespeare. But in them they are an ornament, an occasional grace. In Donne it is everywhere. It is his very genius, and fashions his feeling and his thought. He is overweighted with allusions to philosophical doctrines, even scholastic philosophy in which he was expert, and to contemporary science, even of the most abstruse description. His Muse loves those sudden flights from the material to the spiritual sphere for which Dryden gave him, and Samuel Johnson confirmed to him, the title of "Metaphysical." He deserves it also for his obscurity, which is sometimes terrible. He is again like Browning because the very difficulty in reading him has counted for something in his success, because it became a point of vanity to be subtle enough to apprehend his subtlety, to have enough mental agility to follow his somersaults.

We have spoken hitherto only of the secular poems of his youth. They are the best. Moreover, his religious poems differ from them only in theme; their spirit is the same. He is at his best in short pieces. In his longer, more ambitious poems, like the *Anatomy of the World*, and *Of the Progress of the Soul*, also called the *First Anniversary* and the *Second Anniversary*, he is nothing short of unbearable, for all that these verses are illumined by stray lightning flashes. He was made for surprises

and rapid flights, and had neither the constructive nor the staying power which could keep him long on the wing. Moreover, such quintessence of the fantastic is intolerable except in small doses, as was proved by his many imitators, the Metaphysicals of the seventeenth century. The long poems of that age are few and, except for those of Milton, negligible. But the poets produced copiously little sets of verses which are found in anthologies and are sometimes exquisite.

Like his contemporaries, Gongora in Spain and Marini in Italy, Donne carried a characteristic of the Renascence to the extreme. His poetry, otherwise very distinct from theirs, has in common with it an exaggerated subtlety, but while their refinement was especially one of style and manner, he refined thought.

CHAPTER IV

PROSE FROM 1578 TO 1625

1. *The Novelists and Writers of Short Stories: Greene, Lodge, Nashe, Deloney, Dekker.*[1]—Poetry dominates the whole of the Renascence to such a point that it often invades the sphere of prose. True prose, simple, restrained and clear, fit not to impassion but to instruct, not to flatter the imagination but to satisfy the reason, is exceptional in this age. Many of the prose works of the Elizabethan period derive from the models provided by Lyly's euphuism and Sidney's Arcadianism, which is to say that they are marked by the characteristics of poetic prose. This is particularly evident in the work of the novelists.

(*a*) ROBERT GREENE.—It is most noticeable in the romantic part of the works of Robert Greene (1560-92), Lyly's disciple and successor. He is of those who imitated the prettinesses and artifices of euphuism. Anthony Munday, Barnabe Rich, Melbancke and Warner are with him, but he is, if not a more prolific, surely a more pleasing writer than they. A Cambridge man who drifted into Bohemia, he wandered about Italy and Spain, where he "saw and practised such villainy as is abominable to declare," then settled in London as the hack of booksellers and companies of actors among whom his work was much in request. At one time almost rich, at another in indigence, he led a life of debauchery among women of the street and in taverns, deserting

[1] Texts: A. Esdaile, *A List of English Tales and Prose Romances* (1912); R. Greene in *Life and Works of Greene,* ed. Grosart, 15 vols. (1881-6); Nashe, ed. Grosart, 6 vols (1883-5); ed McKerrow, 4 vols. (1904); Deloney, ed. Mann (1912); Dekker, *Non-Dramatic Works,* ed. Grosart (1881). The following romances separately: Greene, *Menaphon,* ed. Arber (1880); *Groat's Worth of Wit,* ed. Harrison (1923); Lodge, *Rosalinde* (Cassell's National Library), Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller or the Life of Jacke Wilton*, ed. Gosse (1892), and Brett Smith (1920); Deloney, *The Gentle Craft in Palæstre,* xviii. (1903); Dekker, *The Gull's Horne Book*, ed Saintsbury (1902), *The Seven Deadly Sins of London* (The Percy Reprints, 1922).

See W. L. Cross, *Development of the English Novel* (1905); W. Raleigh, *The English Novel* (1904); Jusserand, *The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare,* 4th ed. (1902); Jordan, *Robert Greene* (Columbia University Publications, 1915).

his wife and child. Yet at heart he was an idyllist, and his euphuistic romances are on as high a moral plane as Lyly's. *Mamilia*, published in 1583, was intended to warn young men against the seemingly pure love which might seduce them to lust. He also wrote *Arbasto, Perimedes* which was imitated from Boccaccio, *Pandosto*, and *Menaphon* published in 1589.

If his style and his moral tone are adopted from *Euphues*, his themes are as romantic as those of the author of *Arcadia*. *Arbasto*, for instance, is a love story as complicated as it is tragic. Arbasto, king of Denmark, placed between the two daughters of the king of France, loves one of them unrequitedly, is loved by the other to whom he is indifferent, and finally is the cause of both their deaths. The romantic character of *Pandosto* can be conceived from the *Winter's Tale*, for which it supplied the plot. *Menaphon* is an agreeable Arcadian pastoral, full of very poetic passages and of graceful songs which excuse its extravagance. It proves the serenity and purity of this Bohemian's imagination. The conventional opening is really touching, the scene of the shipwreck in which a woman and her infant son are cast upon the shore, and she hushes him with that lovely cradle-song:

> Weep not my wanton, smile upon my knee.

There is an element of true feeling at the heart of these fantastic stories.

But Greene did not always write romance. He had also a more popular and realistic vein illustrated in the series of short stories called the *Conny-catching Tracts* (1591-2), in which he turns to profit his acquaintance with every kind of ruffian, thief, loose woman and rascal in order to paint the underworld of London and initiate the reader to the whole bag of sharpers' tricks for decoying the unwary. Whether his first object be indeed, as he professes, to put the innocent on their guard against the rogues, whether his tales be not calculated to awaken an unhealthy interest in this cockney hell rather than to enforce a lesson in prudence, is uncertain. He undoubtedly enjoys retailing all the swindling, and sometimes, when he forgets himself, he is unquestionably on the side of the swindlers. His journalist's business—he is complacently recounting the happenings of disreputable streets—leads him to abandon euphuism for a simpler manner, and he thus enters on the road which led to De Foe.

The question of his sincerity arises especially in connection with his *Confessions*, the last in date of his prose works. Worn out by debauchery and poverty he brought out, one after another, several pamphlets filled from end to end with sorrowful self-accusation. In these he avers his own conversion and deplores his errors, but this intemperate conversion involves the accusation of the companions of his debauchery, George Peele, Nashe and Marlowe, whom, without any scruple for implicating them, he apostrophises. Repentance for their atheism, lusts and blasphemies mingles with his remorse for his own backslidings, and he adjures them to be converted too. He must have been a drunkard to the end, for vinous tears have certainly watered the ink with which he pens these pages. The most famous passage is that in which this popular theatre hack denounces a new playwright who once dressed himself out in borrowed plumes taken from Greene and his friends, but now can do without them. Here we have the first evidence of the success of Shakespeare, the actor-author. At the thought of his rivalry, Greene's complaints are turned to fury, and he forgets that he is speaking of the very vanities which elsewhere he declares himself to have outlived and exhorts his former boon-companions to abandon.

(b) Thomas Lodge.—Thomas Lodge (1558-1625), wiser than Greene, ended his life, after a short and fairly brilliant career, in the sober middle-class as a well-known doctor, and left behind him one euphuistic romance which is the most attractive of them all, *Rosalinde*, written in 1590 and the source of *As You Like It.* Undoubtedly Shakespeare read it with delight, and he was much in the author's debt, not only for his plot, but also for the character of his heroine. The romance is a medley, frequently charming, of monologues and witty sentimental dialogues, after the manner of Lyly, and of songs which are among the most delicately refined of the period.

(c) Thomas Nashe.—Thomas Nashe (1567-1601) was, however, the real successor of Greene, the realist and satirist. Known at the age of twenty-five as the young Juvenal, he did not indeed wait for Greene's example before he gave rein to his liveliness. He was the pre-eminently picaresque author of the period and also the best equipped of the pamphleteers. Having acquired learning at Cambridge, he came to London, became Greene's friend, and flung himself desperately into every current

day in the *Anatomie of Absurditie* (1589), *Pierce Penilesse, his Supplication to the Divill* (1592), *Christ's Teares over Jerusalem* (1593), and the *Terrors of the Night* (1594). Once he tried his hand at a romance, and being incapable of submitting to the starched style of euphuism or assuming the namby-pamby innocence of the pastoral, he resorted to the picaresque, and produced the *Unfortunate Traveller, or the Life of Jacke Wilton*. The story purports to be historical: to relate the life of Jack Wilton, a page in the reign of Henry VIII. who becomes an unscrupulous adventurer, and with whom we wander through Flanders, Germany and Italy, meeting many celebrities and witnessing some famous scenes. Wilton is present at the battle of Marignan, at the fall of Münster and at the massacre of the Anabaptists; he becomes the friend of Surrey during that nobleman's courtship of Geraldine; he watches Erasmus writing his *Praise of Folly* and Thomas More meditating his *Utopia;* he hears Luther's and Carlstadt's invectives against the pope and assists at the necromantic séances of Cornelius Agrippa. All these semi-historical scenes follow each other regardless of chronology and order, and with homely episodes interspersed among them. All have the vigour and concrete life imparted by a mocking imagination. It was the second part of this novel which made the greatest impression on the author's contemporaries. Its scene is Italy, and it shows in turn the magnificent Italy of the arts and the Italy of courtesans and assassins Nashe alternates his admiration and his execration, now lures the traveller by the marvels he displays, now vituperates, as decidedly as Roger Ascham, the English who visit this land of crime, but he certainly gives much the most space to horrors. He first lays in abundant material for the later melodramatists, Marston, Tourneur, Webster and Middleton, whose land of predilection Italy was. If Nashe begins by preserving the grotesque character of his scenes of strange debauchery and incredible tortures—the furies of the Jew Zadoch who seems to parody Marlowe's Barabas—he ends by relating the history of a vendetta, seriously, intensely and passionately. His style changes. He rids himself of his habitual eccentricities, and recounts swiftly, clearly and nakedly how Cutwolfe pursued Esdras, his brother's murderer, for twenty months, came upon him, unarmed, in his chamber, was deaf to the cowardly brigand's supplications, and with bran-

dished dagger brought him, in the hope of a respite, to damn his soul with fearful blasphemies, before his throat was cut even as he uttered the abominations which must unfailingly send him straight to hell. No words painting a wretch's abject fear of death more strongly were ever to be uttered on the stage. "Thou canst not send me to such a hell as already there is in my heart. . . . Thy over-hanging sword hides heaven from my sight." Nor, especially, was the horrible enthusiasm of Cutwolfe, as he voices his joy in vengeance, ever equalled:

> Of hell doo I esteeme better than heaven, if it affoord me revenge. There is no heaven but revenge. I tell thee, I would not have undertooke so much toyle to gaine heaven, as I have done in pursuing thee for revenge. Divine revenge, of which (as one of the joies above) there is no fulnes or satietie.

The apostrophe continues in the same strain of puissant hatred. When it is Cutwolfe's turn to be led to his death, his exaltation is the same, and before he too dies, after the most refined tortures, he again declares the glory and the joy of revenge.

This last story is in such contrast to the rest of the romance that we are moved to ask if it be by the same author. No other from whom it might have been translated has, however, been cited.

Nashe's one novel and his numerous pamphlets won him great repute and an influence which survived him. He was imitated with an energy less tumultuous than his by Dekker, and with truculency almost equal to his own by Middleton. Even his university kept a pride in his original talent. "Let all his faults sleep with his mournful chest," exhorted the *Returne from Parnassus* in 1602,

> Yet this I say, that for a mother's wit,
> Few men have ever seen the like of it.

(d) Thomas Deloney.—Quite opposite qualities constitute the merit of Thomas Deloney (1543?-1600?), who has been recently discovered as a novelist. This weaver used to be known only as an author of popular ballads, some of them historical and patriotic, and others comic or sentimental, but all of mediocre value as poetry. In his lifetime they excited the mockery of the literate, of Nashe among others. But in his last years Deloney wrote also a series of prose works to the glory of two powerful

livery companies, the Weavers and the Cordwainers. He reproduces better than anyone else the spirit, the feelings and the prejudices of the craftsman's world to which he belonged. Before there were any plays to flatter the tastes of this considerable section of the London public, Deloney wrote for them these curious books, entirely given up to stories of the crafts. His *Jacke of Newbury* relates the rise of a young weaver's apprentice who marries his master's widow and prospers marvellously. It takes us into the great weaver's shop with its two hundred looms, each worked by one man with a boy to help him, one hundred women carders and two hundred spinsters, not to speak of the hundred and fifty children who pick the wool, the fifty shearers, the eighty rovers, the twenty fullers. It is not surprising that the rich owner receives a visit from King Henry VIII. and figures as an historical personage.

The series of short stories devoted to the Cordwainers constitutes a complete, if not a truthful, history of their mystery. The *Gentle Craft* is a survey of shoemakers from legendary times and a pendant to the genealogies of nobles and kings. The trade was very much of the people, with its apprentices who sang rhymes and cracked jokes while they worked the leather, with its travelling journeymen trudging from town to town, their tools, the bones of St. Hugh, on their backs. Deloney sings their annals from the beginning, from the time of St. Hugh, their patron saint, who was martyred under Diocletian. There follows the story of Crispin and Crispian, sons of the queen of Logria, who were persecuted by the Emperor Maximian but finally triumphed, so that Crispin, the saint, married the emperor's daughter. The chronicler then jumps to the fifteenth century, and relates the rise, under Henry VI., of Simon Eyre, who became lord mayor, founded the leather-market in Leadenhall and acquired lasting popularity by instituting a holiday on which the Cordwainers' apprentices feasted at his cost. Afterwards, under Henry VIII., Richard Castelar, who was no less rich, bequeathed his fortune to the poor and the hospitals.

Into this frame Deloney introduces a number of homely scenes. Caring nothing for historical colour, he sketches prentices and journeymen from the life, at work in the shops, singing, arguing, making love to customers who are usually maidservants from the taverns, or involved in amorous adventures which recall

the fabliaux. Or he shows the relations between workmen and masters, the master's hearty and generous good nature in conflict with the niggardliness of his wife, and his refusal to countenance the housekeeping economies by which she would increase profits. Or again, we see the good journeyman who cannot rest when the spring comes, who asks his master to settle his account and wanders off on the broad highway to seek another shop, humming a merry song as he goes.

Deloney has two manners for the telling of all these stories. For such as are pitched in a lofty or a sentimental key he is wont to have recourse to euphuism, for as a man of the people he is behind the times. It was some years since the fine language of euphuism had fallen from its place at court and found a home with the class of humbler citizens who were straining to be genteel. But when, as happens more frequently, Deloney paints workshop scenes, making his workmen speak, he uses the clearest and nimblest and also the gayest prose of his time. He is no poet, but he has the gift of good humour, and we owe him the brightest, the most genuinely merry pages of a period in which prose was overdriven by the taste for lyricism or for truculent buffoonery. Although these stories were forgotten for three centuries, they were much appreciated by the author's contemporaries. They were of undoubted service to Dekker, who almost immediately used the life of Simon Eyre for his excellent *Shoemakers Holiday*, and Heywood was probably also indebted to them, since he too greatly desired to gratify the pride of the livery companies. It is true that Deloney's realism is under suspicion. His plans did not allow him to paint any but flattering pictures of the industries of his day. He had taken an engagement to honour them. But he knew them through and through. We feel that his books bring us near to them. He gives us access to this society of citizens and craftsmen, as yet untouched by Puritanism, which from this time was one of the great forces of England and one of her storehouses of merriment and vitality.

(c) THOMAS DEKKER.—It was Dekker who in the reign of James I. succeeded Greene and Nashe as a prose-writer, although his best comedy was inspired by Deloney. He wrote not novels, but social studies and pictures of London life. He began with occasional tracts, like his *Wonderfull Yeare*, which had for subject the year 1603, in which Elizabeth died, James I. succeeded

her, and one of the great plagues of London occurred. Dekker commemorates these events in a style of which the imagery and truculency recall Nashe and which often is near parody. It might almost be a poem in mock-heroic prose and the author's seriousness is always in doubt. It is true that he paints the plague in an allegory which does not lack grandeur: death is shown encamped with his army of scourges in the sin-stained outskirts of the city. His troops attack, seize the town, massacre men, women and children, loot and waste. Dekker, who aims at producing a strong effect, is prodigal of macabre description, apostrophes of the plague and hyperbole, not omitting pedantic reminiscences; and his very excess of rhetoric weakens the impression, so that we long for those simple, poignant pages in which De Foe was to tell the story of the Great Plague of 1665. The anecdotes with which Dekker relieves the gloom of his picture, and which, for the refreshment of the reader, he chooses for their amusing quality, have more merit, but they throw yet further doubt on the sincerity of the author's emotion. We have, for instance, the story of the cobbler's wife who believes herself at the point of death, and confesses to her husband and neighbours all the infidelities with the husbands of other women of which she has been guilty. Groaning, "All are sinners," her husband forgives her. But she recovers, and the wronged wives are getting ready to tear out her eyes when, happily, everyone adjourns to the tavern and anger is quenched in Bordeaux wine. The scene ends with a general reconciliation.

The story of the adventure of the wandering tinker who, in a panic-stricken country town, dares, for a crown, to carry to his grave a rich London citizen who has died suddenly at the inn, is also most entertainingly told. The tinker finds seven pounds in the dead man's pocket, and comes back to the village crying, "Have ye any more Londoners to bury, hey downe a downe dery, have ye any more Londoners to bury," but the villagers scatter before him in fright.

Dekker is more successful in comedy than in tragedy, as he proves in the *Batchelars Banquet*, the light-hearted version of the *Quinze joies du mariage* and *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. It is a series of pictures of the miseries of conjugal life, that is of the unhappiness of husbands, invariably represented as good fellows, invariably deceived and invariably unfortunate. Dekker tells his

story vivaciously, retailing conversations between husband and wife, throwing the part of the mother-in-law into relief, and bringing gossips and gay dogs back to life. The realism is often very lively, and would be more convincing were not the author too faithful to the spirit of the fabliau, did he not too persistently take sides against the *Legende of Goode Women*. His women are all wittingly bad. He does not allow one of them to worry her husband with good intention, to torment him by excessive affection or even by jealousy.

Greene's tracts on the rogues of London are recalled by Dekker's *Belman of London* (1608), and Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse* by his *Seaven Deadly Sinnes of London* (1606), and even more by his *Newes from Hell brought by the Divells Carrier* (1606). But Dekker had found himself when, in 1609, he wrote the *Guls Horn-Booke*, an ironic guide for a man of fashion who is duper and duped by turns. The Gull is a snob of olden times, an apprentice to the art of profligacy, and he ruffles it for his hour, plucked, the while, by tavernkeepers, swindlers and women of the street.

He reaches town from the country very ignorant, unable to read or write but determined to live in great style. Dekker undertakes his education. He advises him on the means to his end without ever departing from that ironic style which has been called grobianism, after *Grobianus*, a work of the German Dedekind (1549), itself much in debt for its manner to Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*. To grobianise is to supply advice or praise which conceals ridicule and shows up the absurdity of its object. Ben Jonson had resort to this device in his comedy *Cynthia's Revels*, and Swift was to make admirable use of it, particularly in his *Directions to Servants in general*.

Dekker's book ranks high in this series. At first he translates *Grobianus*, but he soon emancipates himself sufficiently from its influence to be both local and original. He gives one of the richest of all the pictures of the life of pleasure in Jacobean London, following his Gull from the time he gets up until he goes to bed. He takes him to St. Paul's, then the meeting-place of idlers, adventurers and debtors pursued by their creditors. These poor wretches, empty of pocket and stomach, "dine with the good Duke Humphrey," which is to say that they fast near the monument identified with Humphrey of Gloucester, the son

of Henry IV. "There you may spend your legs in winter a whole after-noone: converse, plot, laugh and talke any thing, jest at your Creditor, even to his face, and in the evening, even by lamp-light, steale out, and so cozen a whole covy of abhominable catch-pols."

Thence the Gull passes to an ordinary, where his campaigning stories dazzle his fellow-diners, or, if he pique himself on a poetic gift, he recites his own or his purloined verses. It is, however, especially at the playhouse that Dekker, himself a playwright, advises his Gull to let himself be seen. There, as might one of Molière's little marquises, he must display his person and shout his remarks, seated well to the front of the stage at the risk of getting into the way of the actors. He must defy the audience as they yell abuse at him, yawn at the most pathetic moments in the play, and noisily leave in the very middle, "with a screwd and discontented face." Thereafter the Gull goes to the tavern, where he spends much money, and is careful to call the drawers by their Christian names and to appear intimate with the host and hostess. At night he returns home, attended by a boy bearing a lanthorn, and assuming airs of grandeur in order to deceive passers-by and intimidate the watch.

Dekker's sketches confirm and complete the pictures of London life in the comedies of the time, particularly those of Jonson and Middleton. His prose has lost its heaviness and is excellent. His irony hardly ever flags, is always good-humoured, and is relieved by numerous details of fact of which the presentment is lively and accurate and original by force of its very accuracy. There is nothing left of Nashe's deforming truculency which produced not pictures but caricatures. Dekker is in direct contact with reality, preserves actual proportions and respects line and colour. He is on the road which leads to the humorists of Anne's reign. From afar he heralds Swift, and chiefly Steele and Addison, for he is a less bitter writer than Swift. Not for a whole century did another author thus combine realism and humour.

2. *The Authors of Characters: Overbury, Stephens, Earle.*— Dekker is less a novelist than a collector, an amateur of manners. Side by side with him certain writers may be placed who drew so-called "characters," imitating Theophrastus as La Bruyère did after them. They were closely connected with the satirists in verse, of whom Joseph Hall produced one of the earliest of the

imitations of Theophrastus in his *Characters of Vices and Vertues* (1608). It was, however, Sir Thomas Overbury[1] who gave this genre a really literary character by the twenty-one prose portraits which he added to his poem *A Wife* (1614). There is wit and point in these drawings of types, of which he praises some while he reveals the vices of others. They are a rapid review of society by a lettered courtier attached to the feudal order and hostile to Puritans.

In 1615 John Stephens, a young lawyer, followed in the steps of Overbury with his *Satirical Essays, Characters and Others*, as did John Earle (1601?-1665)[2] with *Microcosmographie*, which was published in 1628 after it had circulated for some years in manuscript. This inquiry into society was taken up by author after author, and the resultant picture became more and more complete. In every instance it is noticeable that the search for pointed phraseology and curious turns of speech and the wish to condense led to the advancement of prose. The art of portraiture in words was thus developed in England at the same time as in France, although in a different way. The English did not pursue it in drawing-rooms, but made their sketches in solitude. Their style had consequently a quaintness unknown to the French and often lacked good taste, but in compensation they allowed themselves considerable play of fancy, often with a happy effect.

3. *Dramatic Prose.*—Greene, Nashe and Dekker were dramatic authors, and the qualities of their prose betray their habit of appealing to a mixed public who demanded nimble speech, either clear or arresting. Other dramatists also produced prose works: Jonson's *Discoveries* is in this medium, as are Thomas Heywood's *Apology for Actors* and *England's Elizabeth*, and Middleton's *Black Book* and *Father Hubbard's Tales*. It is not, however, necessary to go outside the theatre in order to find dramatists' prose, for most of them gave it a considerable, if not the first, place in their plays, and its progress cannot be well understood without an examination of the characteristics of the numerous prose scenes scattered among the dramas of the Renascence.

Gascoigne, no later than 1566, in his comedy *Supposes*, trans-

[1] Complete edition by F. Rimbault (1856; reprinted 1890).
[2] Ed. A. S. West (1897).

lated from Ariosto's *Gli Suppositi*, was the first to forsake verse. Yet for many years afterwards no author resolutely made prose his only medium. John Lyly, who wrote all but one of his plays in prose, is an exception. There is no need to repeat what has been said of the characteristics of his euphuistic style, which he transferred from romance to drama with little modification of its eccentric features, except such as was occasionally necessary to rapid and witty dialogue. But Lyly in this genre stands alone. In general, the playwrights of the Renascence varied their medium to suit characters and mood. Most of them alternated verse and prose, and they almost all made it a rule to use, in one play, verse for tragic and lofty passages and prose for homely and comic scenes. Marlowe did this in his *Jew of Malta* and his *Doctor Faustus*, Greene in his *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, and Shakespeare in almost all his plays observed their precedent.

Shakespeare rarely keeps the two forms separate, and the plays which he wrote entirely in verse are few. They are *Richard II.* and *King John*, for even *Richard III.* has a few fragments of prose. He wrote no play all in prose, not even the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, that burgher comedy in which prose dominates. His custom was to mingle the two forms. Often the principle of distribution is easy and clear: the tragic is reserved for verse and the comic expressed in prose. Clowns, and the definitely humorous characters allied to clowns, abstain from verse. This is exemplified in *Romeo and Juliet*, where the gossiping nurse is almost alone in her use of prose, and in *Henry IV.*, where all the great historical scenes are in verse and all those which centre about Falstaff in prose.

Sometimes, however, the alternation of prose and verse is much more difficult to explain. In certain passages it is hard to account for it except by a need of variety, but only rarely can no other and more subtle artistic reason be discovered to justify it. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, for instance, there are two parallel scenes, both mainly comic. In one, Benedick's friends, speaking in his hearing when he believes himself hidden, contrive that he shall think that Beatrice is in love with him. This is in prose. In the other, Beatrice's cousin and her gentlewoman similarly convince her that Benedick loves her madly, and this is in verse.

These two successive scenes are entirely different in tone, as a consequence of their difference of form, and reflection shows their

diversity to be just and appropriate. Each of them gives birth to love in the heart of one of the young people. For Benedick, whose vanity is flattered, this is mainly a laughing matter, but it is touching and almost tragic for the shy and maidenly girl who cannot admit the feeling without pain and disturbance.

Prose is also the normal medium of certain even of the poetic characters of Shakespeare, for instance of Rosalind in *As You Like It*. That this charming heroine of a most fanciful play speaks in prose almost exclusively is at first surprising. But only prose is sudden and swift enough to render her astonishing flow of imagination and words, her marvellous nimbleness of tongue. Rosalind is the most exquisite of chatterboxes. To make her speech rhythmic would be to make it slower, to rob it of a little of its spontaneity. The voice would no longer be able to produce the desired effect of words gushing out unquenchably.

These facts are simple beside others which can be deduced from the great dramas. It is not at first apparent why one of the most outstanding passages in *Hamlet* is in prose, that where the prince, anticipating Pascal, paints the contrast which is in man, half-god and half-beast. Hamlet is on the stage with his false friends whom he suspects to be spies. How is it that the scene, at first familiar in tone and naturally in prose, does not, like so many others in Shakespeare's plays, rise into verse at the great speech, and how is it that even in this highly lyrical effusion we feel prose to be in perfect harmony with the mood? The reason is that Hamlet's words would not have had the air of confidence and carelessness which he was feigning if he had interposed verse between himself and those he addressed. Even while he expresses his pessimism, he remains on his guard against emphasis.

But the most surprising use of prose of all is Othello's, who passes from verse to prose at the most tragic moments, for instance in the first scene of Act IV. It is that in a paroxysm of jealousy, maddened by Iago's lies, he has what is almost an epileptic seizure and his speech, in its incoherence, breaks free of all rhythm. He utters cries rather than words. For an analogous reason prose is introduced into what is perhaps the most pathetic scene in the play, that between Othello and Iago in which the murder of Desdemona is determined, and Othello is constantly torn by the thought of all the beauty, grace and love

about to perish. "Nay, that's certain—but yet the pity of it, Iago—O Iago! the pity of it, Iago." Here again the poet abstains from rhythm in order the better to mark the disarray of this soul, to show this nature which had been master of itself thrown off its balance and staggering in bewilderment. The terrible struggle within Othello is indicated by such abandonment of the stately measure of blank verse which up to this point had seemed the natural rhythm of his voice.

Similarly Lear in the height of his madness rejects verse, which is necessarily ruled and reasoned, or adopts it only in brief snatches, in such fragments as he utters when he wanders distractedly in the fields near Dover.

It is nearly always possible to detect in this way the poet's subtle intention when he changes from one form to the other, and to perceive that it is not haste of composition which causes him to forgo verse. Manifestly he is conscious of the value proper to prose, and does not make the mistake of turning it into poetry mechanically, universally or in defiance of sense.

In confining his clowns to prose, he is giving to special actors the mode of expression proper to their parts, one which has its ritual and traditional rhythm, although not that of verse, indeed a rhythm unworthy to be versified.

In serious passages of his plays he uses prose to produce an eloquence distinct from that in verse, partaking less of imagery and more of ratiocination. Thus Henry V., on the eve of Agincourt, proves to the soldiers that the king is not guilty of their damnation if they die in a state of sin. He speaks like a lawyer, and nothing but prose could have shown his need to exonerate himself, to argue and to prove. Similarly Brutus, rashly appealing to the reason of the Roman people, harangues them in prose, while Mark Antony, when he wishes to rouse them, inflames their passions with admirable verse.

Shakespeare was able to use prose so largely and artistically only because he had cultivated the qualities inherent in it. The extraordinarily nimble speech of Henry V., as he pleads his cause, is surprising beside the rest of sixteenth-century prose and difficult to equal in this generation. In such passages Shakespeare's prose has a ready, certain flow which was never surpassed It is, moreover, true and not poetic prose.

Shakespeare must none the less be classified as a poet who

gave some space to prose. His prose is subordinate and the essence of his work and his genius is poetic. It was other playwrights who made prose reign on the stage, especially Ben Jonson, who was a prose-writer first of all, although he often obliged himself to translate his thought into verse and did it vigorously, sometimes, in his songs, even gracefully. Prose was, however, better suited to his robust and realistic temperament, and like a good humanist he formed his prose style carefully, making close translations of Latin passages which struck him during his reading, then altering them slightly, on occasion, to adapt them to existing circumstances. We can watch the process in the curious notebook which he published under the title of *Discoveries*.[1] Nor was this all. He also meditated on the laws of language and wrote the first English grammar; and although the complete version of this work was destroyed in 1623, when his library was burnt, and only his notes for it now remain, they are enough to indicate the analytical bent which made him a contrast to his contemporaries, with their carelessness of rules and their dependence on current uses or inspiration.

A large part of Ben Jonson's plays is in prose. Not only does he nearly always use it abundantly, interspersed with verse, but it is also the sole medium of two of his comedies, *Epicœne, or the Silent Women*, and *Bartholomew Fayre*. Many will consider that prose suited his talent better than verse, for while his versification is strong, it is harsh and has no flexibility or swing. It lacks light-heartedness and sonority. His prose, on the other hand, is natural, comparatively terse and rich in concrete details. Wit and humour are not frequent in it, but it is solidly significant, accurate and often eloquent.

Prose was not spoken on the stage only in Shakespeare's and Jonson's plays, and a complete review of the subject would cover the work of almost all the playwrights of the day. But the others were ranged under these two leaders and contributed no new qualities of their own. Enough has been said to show the part of the theatre in the development of prose. It brought it near to everyday speech at a time when it tended either to formlessness or to excessive mannerism, was either unduly learned, pedantic and Latin in construction, or so overcharged with parentheses as to be obscure. Beneath the Latinised prose of the theologians,

[1] Ed. by M. Castelain, Paris (1906).

philosophers, moralists and controversialists of the Renascence, there existed this other prose of the dramatists, which was formed on the spoken language and was idiomatic and clear. It was this prose which reappeared half a century later and became general, penetrating to the genres to which it did not at first have access.

4. *Literary Criticism.*[1]—Criticism of literature figured considerably in the prose of the English Renascence in point of the number of the works produced, but was of mediocre value and importance. It was very little original, almost wholly inspired by theories put forth on the Continent which themselves closely followed antiquity. Only rarely did critics adapt themselves to the special circumstances of the country and write with a direct bearing on the great English works which multiplied without attracting their notice. So completely did they ignore what was immediately presented to them that they are little more than abstract writers.

In this as in all other fields Italy was well in advance of the rest of Europe. When the foundations of doctrine and of the social hierarchy were shaken, it was in Italy that men of letters first sought to justify their existence and win honour. Criticism had a double aim: it wished both to glorify literature and to proclaim its laws. When the Italians undertook this task, they chose the ancients for their guides. They turned to Aristotle's *Poetics* or Horace's *Ars Poetica,* where they found established the principle of the imitation of nature and the consequent doctrine of reason, objectivity and classical wisdom. Or they went to Plato, who spoke to them of an ideal of poetic beauty emanating from the individual poet, which led to an imaginative and subjective literature with the characteristics subsequently called romantic. Scaliger, with his *Poetice* of 1561, represents Aristotelian criticism, as Minturno, with his *Ars Poetica* of 1564, stands for Platonic criticism. These two writers did in some sort carry criticism to philosophic heights, but elsewhere in Europe it was humbler, more utilitarian or more matter-of-fact. In the countries not yet sure of themselves the problem was how to establish the literary claims of the national language so as to

[1] *Elizabethan Critical Essays,* ed. Gregory Smith, 2 vols. (1904). See Saintsbury, *History of Criticism,* vol. ii, book iv. (1902), and Spingarn, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance,* part iii. (1899).

awaken ambition. Such was the object of du Bellay in his *Défense et Illustration de la langue française*. In England the moral issue was dominant, the first to be considered and the stimulus to discussion. It had, as early as 1568, the place of honour in Ascham's *Scholemaster*, where it was the motive for opposition to Italianism, which was condemned in the name not of beauty, but of virtue.

But Ascham wrought no change. The corruption of which he denounced the inroads had, ten years later, established itself on English soil, to the scandal of serious and upright men who tended consequently to regard poetry as synonymous with depravity.

Hence the attack of a man of letters converted to Puritanism, Stephen Gosson, whose *School of Abuse* (1579) is directed against all secular literature, making no distinction between "Poets, Pipers, Plaiers, Jesters, and such like Caterpillars of a Commonwelth." His principal animus is against the theatre, but, like the Christian preachers, he extends his condemnation to cover much else. Poets he calls "the fathers of lyes," and therefore he considers poetry bad in essence. Anticipating Rousseau, he adds that it is destructive of energy and enervates and effeminates a nation.

This invective has survived because of the retort it provoked. Gosson dedicated it to Sidney, who was known for his nobility and purity of soul, and reputed the champion of the Protestant cause. While Thomas Lodge, the playwright, immediately answered it with a wholly pedantic *Defence of Poetry*, laden with classical quotations and no longer of interest, Sidney replied at leisure, apparently for his own satisfaction, since his *Defence of Poesie* was published only in 1595, long after his death. His plea for poetry constitutes one of the most eloquent and most pleasing prose works of the period.

On the whole, Sidney agrees with Gosson in holding existing English literature cheap, especially English drama, but he condemns it not for reasons of morals, but because the works he considers seem to him weak, mediocre, ridiculous, bereft of art. Of poetry in itself he has the most exalted conception. The poet is for him the first lawgiver of a society, the *vates*, superior both to the historian, who is chained to reality, and to the philosopher, who is obliged to be constantly severe and abstract. The poet

paints the ideal with beguiling charm. Far from softening men, poetry has been a chief awakener of the warlike spirit and the virtues of chivalry. Even a popular, ill-rhymed ballad like *Chevy Chase*, "sung but by some blind crowder with no rougher voice than rude stile," even the Arthurian romances with all their absurdities, are a call to man's courage and his desire for glory. In conclusion, Sidney declares that, although English literature is still poor, it seems to him capable of high destinies.

The style of the *Defence of Poesie* is eloquent, frequently poetic but much less decorated, both franker and more virile, than *Arcadia*. Sidney makes fun in it of euphuism, proposes Demosthenes and Cicero as models, and protests against the abusive use of literary ornaments. "For now they cast sugar and spice upon every dish that is served at the table: like those Indians, not content to wear ear-rings at the fit and natural place of the ears, but they will thrust jewels through their nose and lips, because they will be sure to be fine."

In fact, no other critical English work as broad and as much alive was written in this period. All the important questions are stated and treated in it, whereas elsewhere there are only technical treatises and discussions on points of detail. What strikes us especially, when we seek to estimate Sidney's book as a whole, is that from beginning to end he respects the precepts of the ancients and unreservedly condemns the literary methods, his own and those of others, which were practised in his time. His *Arcadia* is in conflict with his theory. As much is true of all his contemporary authors. No sooner does one of them turn critic, than he adheres to the school of antiquity, careless whether or not his own work obey the laws he accepts and recommends.

This applies even to Ben Jonson, the playwright who discussed his art most. He poses arrogantly and defiantly as the disciple of the ancients. But while his criticism is after Horace, in practice he treats the theory he professes almost as cavalierly as his rivals, and not only disregards the unities in the strict sense of the word, but mingles the tragic and the comic. Like the others, he presents a series of historical scenes in his *Sejanus* and his *Catiline*, yet seems to imagine that he is writing tragedies in accordance with the rule.

The playwrights who had not, like Jonson, definitely ranged themselves with the humanists, never define their art. But if,

exceptionally, they approximate to a theory, they show themselves inclined to echo classical judgments with which their practice is in extreme conflict. Thus Shakespeare mocks merrily at the mingling of the comic and the tragic, making fun of the plays which, like the *Pyramus and Thisbe* of Bottom and his fellows, were full of "very tragical mirth," those "lamentable comedies." He alludes to the hetroclite taste of his time, jestingly giving the list of the "historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral," and the others which were in favour, and he laughs at the artless, rude staging of *Pyramus* which parodied his own theatre with its childish expedients. Hamlet, unquestionably his mouthpiece, recommends to the players, on wholly classical principles, the fitting, the moderate and the probable, and is an essentially Aristotelian critic who tolerates clowns with impatience, and since he cannot suppress their part would confine it within strict limits. The play which Hamlet admires and desires to have performed is an oratorical tragedy in the manner of Seneca.

Shakespeare himself doubtless went beyond Hamlet's limitations. Out of his own ideas he chose such of them as he deemed appropriate to the young prince. Yet while he does not make him voice all his experience as an author, he lends him the more refined of his own opinions, those in agreement with the classical writers. Nowhere does he give utterance to an apology for the so modern and so broad form of drama which he himself followed. He merely, with a smile, admits to his public in the prologue to *Henry V.* that he perceives all the improbabilities of his drama, but counts on their "imaginary forces" and their goodwill to "piece out our imperfections with [their] thoughts."

In addition to their controversy on the morality of poetry and their consideration of dramatic art, the men of the English Renascence gave a fair share of attention to a discussion on the comparative merits of measured or reformed, and rhymed verse. The dispute arose in Italy and France, but it was the occasion in England of a long series of attacks and counter-attacks which prove it to have been waged in this country with more heat than elsewhere. It is remarkable that the first antagonists of rhyme were so carried away by their cult of antiquity that they disregarded the existence of blank verse, which seemed to them a bastard and inadequate compromise. They wished, at the same

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time, to abolish rhyme, which they held to be Gothic and barbarous, and they claimed to make English syllables quantitative, long or short as in Latin. Some of them, like Sir John Cheke and Ascham, vaunted the iambic line, and Gabriel Harvey even championed the hexameter. It can serve no purpose to speak of the unreadable poems which Harvey, Stanyhurst, Abraham Fraunce, Campion and others—even, passingly, Sidney and Spenser—produced in accordance with these rules. The metricians of the day were exercised by the question. William Webbe, in *A Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586), shows himself the determined partisan of measured verse. George Puttenham, in *The Arte of English Poesie*, the most voluminous of the technical treatises of the period, is less willing to commit himself and holds the balance between the contesting parties. The poet Thomas Campion, author of so many charming rhymed songs, was in the enemy camp in 1602. In his *Observations on the Art of English Poesie he condemns rhyme as improper to poetry.* The only good effect of his attack was that it induced the poet Samuel Daniel to write his *Defence of Ryme* (1603), which closed this controversy of more than thirty years' standing and was the first example in England of sane æsthetic criticism applied to a special subject. Hitherto all the blows had been aimed wide. On either side there had been pedantry, abuse of authorities, ignorance of essential facts, disregard of blank verse, even confusion between the meanings of the words rhythm and rhyme. Daniel evinced a reasonableness, exactness and perspicacity unknown to the others. Even to-day it is worth while to meditate on his words. He bases himself on uses. While he denies that the admission of rhyme, which exists and pleases many nations, is a matter for discussion, he does not shirk the task of founding rhyme on reason. He does not bow down before the ancients. That rhyme makes rhythm of a kind unknown to them is, he says, their loss, who knew not this "Echo of a delightful report." Nor does rhyme preclude from measure English verse which is based on tonic accent. To complain of the shackles of rhyme is to ignore the nature of the pleasure of poetry and of its creation. The poet finds that "Ryme is no impediment to his conceit, but rather gives him wings to mount, and carries him not out of his course, but as it were beyond his power to a far happier flight." Rhyme is a means of imparting form, outline and limits to imaginative con-

ceptions. It organises chaos. Its terminal cadence gives "a certainty" as well as measure.

Daniel has a secret preference for the stanza over the couplet, and he would reserve feminine rhymes for songs. But these are personal tastes, as he himself knows and says, and he modestly refuses to erect them into law. It was doubtless his fondness for the stanza rather than the couplet which prevented the classical school from acknowledging him as one of the best of their forerunners.

His own moderation impels him to condemn the intransigence of those who would, at one stroke, rule out all the past. But in him this moderation is accompanied by frank independence. He throws off the yoke of antiquity:

> All our understandings are not to be built by the square of Greece and Italie. We are the children of Nature as well as they, we are not so placed out of the way of judgment, but that the same Sunne of Discretion shineth upon us. . . . Wee must not looke upon the immense course of times past, as men overlooke spacious and wide countreys, from off high mountaines, and are never the neerer to judge of the true nature of the soile.

From end to end of his short treatise Daniel unfolds his argument in the same wise and reasonable spirit. His pleading, often directed against the superstition of the humanists, is finely classical in form. It is oratory, less poetic and nervous than the language of Sidney's *Defence*, at times a little redundant, but exceptional in this period by its sequence, its logic and its urbanity. More than any one of his contemporaries, Daniel possessed the qualities of the perfect writer of prose.

5. *Religious Prose. Hooker. The Preachers. The Bible.*—(*a*) THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN THE PURITANS AND THE ANGLICANS. The religious literature of the Elizabethan period, first constituted by a series of violently controversial writings, ended with Hooker's serene and majestic work. The most famous of the disputes which occupied authors was that in which the Calvinists engaged the Anglican Church, the so-called Martin Marprelate Controversy. It began in 1588 and lasted for at least five years. The Marprelates used their secret printing-presses, easily moved and impossible to seize, to bring out a multitude of anonymous pamphlets, of which the authorship is still an almost complete mystery, and in which, with insulting irony, they denounced the bishops as swine, Canterbury Beelzebubs, anti-

christs, foxes, dogs. The attack had a popular turn like the contemporary great French political satire, the *Satire Menippée*. Often the pamphlets had punning titles and always the tone of lampoons. The Anglican replies struck the same note. The bishops, with temporal arms at their disposal, found other defenders among the men of letters, who instinctively execrated and feared the Martinists or Puritans as enemies of secular literature. These champions of Anglican orthodoxy had no religious convictions, but they loved a fight. They were the *condottieri* of this war. They defended episcopacy in the taverns. Thomas Nashe, the disciple of Aretino, is the best known of them. The leading Martinists were arrested in 1593 and hanged, among them the Welshman Penry, who seems to have been the soul of their revolt. Sermons were censored; the gallows and the stocks were used to enforce orthodoxy; and the press was subjected to severe regulation.

(b) RICHARD HOOKER.[1]—Anglicanism was also able to make another and less brutal retort to its detractors, to adopt a persuasive tone and give reasons for its doctrine. The glorious task fell to Richard Hooker (1554-1600). In 1593 and afterwards he published his magisterial work, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity,* which is both a monument of serious controversial literature and one of the first masterpieces of English prose. Hooker was engaged on it until his death in 1600.

He was a man of humble birth whose parents at first intended to apprentice him to trade, but he showed so much precocious knowledge at school that he was sent to Oxford, where his intelligence and piety gave equal edification. He took orders, and in 1584, when he was Master of the Temple, he was drawn into a controversy with the Puritan Travers. Afterwards, instead of seeking honours, Hooker begged as a favour for a country living where he might "behold God's blessings spring out of my mother earth, and eat my own bread without oppositions." The dispute he had sustained had obliged him to probe and to order his ideas. In rural quiet and retirement he composed his great defence of the established Church of England. Izaak Walton has charmingly told the story of the life of this sage, or rather of this saint, candid, shy and kind, helpless against malice and ruled and bullied

[1] *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, ed. Church and Paget (1888); book i., ed. Church (1876). For life of Hooker see *I. Walton's Lives*, ed. Morley (1888).

by an ill-tempered woman, reading Horace while he tended his flock. His brain was, however, no less vigorous than his temper was gentle and docile. He boldly establishes as a principle that the compromising attitude, which has given the enemies of the Church of England matter for so much reproach, is nothing else than a mark of wisdom.

To the extremists who referred everything to the Bible, Hooker retorts that man receives God's teaching from two sources—revelation in the Bible and reason, which is the gift of God. If these two ever seem to be in conflict, it is reason which must be followed. Reason is God's first-born child, and finds everywhere in nature the law which has existed from the beginning, which God gave even to Himself and observed when He created and ordained the world. God is supreme reason. All God's law is a law of reason, and every law of reason is a law of God.

As for the Bible, it reveals the supernatural truths which man could not have discovered by reason alone. It is an additional but not the only light. Hooker deems that man should be guided by all the instruments of knowledge which he possesses, together and concurrently. Papistry appeals to the authority of the Church against reason. Puritanism is essentially an appeal to the authority of the Bible against the Church and against reason also. The Church of England effects a required reconciliation, for it admits the authority of precedents and yet recommends obedience to the Bible, but teaches that all must be controlled by reason.

Starting from these principles, which are very like those held by Pecock in the previous century, Hooker was able to defend the hierarchy and discipline of his Church against the Puritans, who attacked them as unscriptural, and he could similarly defend the ritual and uses which the Puritans considered superstitious. He holds that the Bible dictates no certain laws for the ecclesiastical and the civil polity, and that positive laws are partly susceptible of change. But since he finds reason plainly reflected in existing societies, since they evidently obey a law, he defends them against the attempts which were being made to disturb and confound them. He very clearly illustrates the conservatism of the Anglican religion.

His book is eminent not only for its ratiocination and the

knowledge it shows, but also for its consistently noble and lofty tone, and the amplitude of its construction which owes much to the *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas. Yet its atmosphere is not the special and exclusive one of theological treatises, for Hooker is at least half a philosopher, and no one has done homage to human reason more finely than he.

The book is also remarkable for its style. For the first time English and not Latin is used for high generalisation. The English is indeed modelled on the Latin for which it is a substitute, markedly Latin in point of vocabulary, and often of construction also, since it uses Ciceronian periods. None the less this prose is luminous and harmonious, and equally removed from pedantry and from vulgarity. It is strictly ruled by logic and aims at convincing the reason, yet it is not without passages which impress the imagination. It is Hooker who first brought the prose of his own language to rank with that of antiquity.

His teaching was fated to be neglected and his cause to be defeated in the seventeenth century, but, besides the success of his book in his own day, he received compensation when Anglicanism was restored. Hooker's ideas, arguments, philosophy and attitude reappeared in all the great Anglican theologians. His blend of traditionalism and rationalism remains the distinctive mark of that religion of England to which he was the first Father of the Church. And outside Anglicanism, his respect and admiration for the law regulating societies recurs, hardly modified, in the famous pages of Burke.

(c) THE PREACHERS.—The same moderate and well-balanced attitude, the same grave eloquence expressed in periods, were shown in Hooker's sermons. His diffidence may have prevented them from having all their rightful effect at the time of their delivery, but they are strong though they appeal less to reason and more to conscience and feeling than his book. The serenity he displays in them was in contrast with the invectives of his contemporaries against the new Babylon. Hooker was courageous and broad-minded enough to affirm the Church of Rome to be the true and sanctified Church of Christ. Far from incriminating Catholicism, he searches it for points of agreement.

He was not, however, the most renowned preacher of his own day. Public favour was accorded first to Bishop Andrewes,

and then, a little later, to John Donne, both of whom were typical preachers of the age, by their defects as by their qualities.

Bishop Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626)[1] was a very learned theologian who knew fifteen languages, who, as a philosopher, was appreciated and consulted by Bacon, and who was as famous for his wit as for his charity. His wit was, however, modified by the fads of the century: he liked to lapse into conceits and plays on words; and he weighted his prose with pedantry, scraps of Latin and Greek. His homilies made him, for his contemporaries, the Star of Preachers and the Angel of the Pulpit, and until the advent of Jeremy Taylor and Tillotson he remained the favourite of his Church. But a change in taste has dimmed his former repute. He inveighed against rhetoric, and yet was far too ready to make sacrifices for rhetorical effect, and part of his success was undoubtedly due to the perfection of his diction.

In the early seventeenth century only John Donne[2] shared his renown. Donne carried into his sermons the strange "metaphysical" subtlety which marks his verses. He considered that the preacher should not speak with "an extemporal or irreverent or over-homely and vulgar language." Certainly he put into his sermons his fantastic rhetoric, and his erudition, his knowledge of the Fathers of the Church, particularly St. Augustine. The obscurity of the preacher is no less conspicuous than that of the poet. He is prodigal of similes and metaphors; he does not always seem clearly to know whither he is bound or where he leads his hearers; his macabre imagination is betrayed by his constant and willing returns to the themes of death and the Judgment. Some of his sentences are quoted as admirable for their rhythm and emphasis, but there is not one of his sermons which exacts admiration as a whole.

(*d*) The Bible of 1611.[3]—Nothing else in the religious prose of the Renascence is equal in literary beauty and importance to the 1611 Authorised Version of the Bible. From Anglo-Saxon times onwards there had been many previous translations

[1] Ed. by F. E. Brightman (1903).
[2] *Donne's Sermons*, selected passages ed. L. P. Smith (1923); *Ten Sermons of Donne*, ed. G. G. Keynes (1924).
[3] Reprint of the Authorised Version by W. A. Wright (Cambridge, 5 vols., 1909). See also A. S. Cook, *The Bible and English Prose Style* (Boston, 1892); J. H. Gardiner, *The Bible as English Literature* (1905); R. G. Moulton, *The Literary Study of the Bible* (1899); A. W. Pollard, *Records of the English Bible*, 1911.

of the Scriptures, but this one remained intact and was accepted by all Protestant sects for nearly three centuries. It was not the first time that Hebrew literature influenced English thought and imagination, but it happened that 1611 marked the beginning of the period in which the Bible really circulated among all classes of the people, became the daily reading of the whole nation. It is therefore at this point important to examine its literary influence on the minds of the English.

It is perhaps especially necessary to insist on the influence of the Old Testament, for the Gospels had always been widely known throughout Christendom, independently of the Reformation. Moreover, it was the Old Testament which chiefly placed its imprint on Puritan minds and fashioned them. The Old Testament is the history of an Oriental people, the fruit of the religious genius of the Hebrew race. Like the Jews, the English were, even before the triumph of Puritanism, prone to consider themselves the chosen people. As early as 1580 Lyly had said that "the living God is only the English God." This opinion, with all the intensity, the enthusiasm, the narrowness, the exclusiveness, and, on occasion, the pitilessness it implied, became general in the seventeenth century. Psalm cxxxvi., with its exaltation of the divine *mercy* which "smote Egypt in their first-born," "overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea," and "slew famous kings," expresses admirably the frame of mind in which Cromwell's soldiers went to battle. This unconscious and blind exclusiveness must be numbered among the foundations of the modern English mentality. The Bible strengthened the religious and moral sense of the English, but, at the same time, it drew about them moral and religious limitations almost as narrow as those which confined the Jews.

This Jewish history, on which millions of the English henceforward meditated and which they assimilated, was conveyed to them in stories, lyrical poems and prophecies. The Old Testament condenses a whole literature in one book, with such unity of passion and sequence as the literature of no other country presents. It claims to be not the work of one author or of several authors of different centuries, but the Word of God, dictated to the various elect of the chosen people in turn, continued through the ages, ever growing but always the same. Yet the style of the several books is very different: the narratives are restrained, brief,

sometimes dry; the lyricism is ardent, metaphorical, redundant; the prophecies often obscure, even enigmatic.

The whole is poetic in form. If not metrical in the Western sense of the word, it is divided into verses, and these give the enjoyment proper to poetry by a parallelism which is the effect of synonyms, of complementary explanation, of antithesis or of repetition. Versification of this kind has the advantage that it can, without much loss, be translated into any language. The verse has only the simple, broad rhythm which is based on the accentuation of the principal words. There is no measure, no rhyme, no prosody. St. Jerome's admirable Vulgate had shown how happily the original might be rendered in Latin. The English Authorised Version is not less beautiful.

Mr. A. S. Cook has resumed as follows those characteristics of the Bible by which it lends itself to translation better than any other poem [1]:

(*a*) Universality of interest. There is much in it for the meanest and most illiterate, and its treasures are not to be exhausted by the wisest. . . .

(*b*) The concreteness and picturesqueness of its language, appealing alike to the child and the poet, while suggesting abundant reflections to the philosopher.

(*c*) The simplicity of its structure, which requires little more from the translator than that he shall render with fidelity one brief clause at a time, and follow it by the next.

(*d*) A rhythm largely independent of the features, prosodical or other, of any individual language.

The translator's great difficulty is to find language at once simple, homely and bold, and yet not coarse. Here the 1611 translators were helped by the earlier translations, which supplied them with a choice of renderings. They rejected the most archaic of these because they had to be intelligible, but they retained a fair number of words and a larger number of turns of phrase and grammatical uses which were still clear although they tended to be of the past. Their basic material was a real biblical dialect which had been wrought by Wyclif, Tindale and Coverdale. It is a religious language at the heart of the English language, which proceeds from it without quite losing its special identity and is charged with all the accumulated pious emotion of successive generations. It is sufficiently recognisable and distinct to

[1] *Cambridge History of English Literature*, book iv., chap. ii.

bring a lofty tone into men's voices, to be marked as sacred among the rest of their speech.

The Authorised Version of 1611 was the work of forty-seven scholars, nominated by James I., over whom Bishop Lancelot Andrewes presided. It was declared to have been produced at the king's special command and to be appointed to be read in churches. It was also adopted by the Puritans in preference to the so-called Geneva Bible.

It frequently attains to beauty, beauty which is as absolute as that of the most beautiful verses. The fact is partly due to the wealth and freshness of the language of the day, which had not yet been desiccated and dulled, and was saved, in this instance, from its habitual faults. The shortness of the verses compelled restraint, and hemmed the language in from overflowing into unending and formless sentences. It is impossible to exaggerate the benefit wrought to literature by the reverent reading and repetition of these admirable chapters. The most literate were preserved from affectation and pedantry; the philosophers acquired an alternative to dry and disfiguring abstractness; the ignorant received an ideal which lifted their speech above the level of the rude and the vulgar. A wandering tinker like Bunyan was able, with no model but the Bible, to become a great English prose-writer.

It has, however, too often been forgotten that the benefit of the Authorised Version is not unmixed. Together with its admirable qualities, the Bible of 1611 had enormous defects which did not fail to retain a long hold on the minds and therefore on the prose of many Englishmen. Partly because of the obscurity of the original texts, and partly because of many mistranslations of sense, the Authorised Version contains numerous quite unintelligible passages, verses and expressions, not to speak of the many places in which the disjointedness of Oriental thought is disconcerting to European minds.

Since it was the accepted Word of God, readers in their thousands applied themselves to deciphering sentences which were really enigmatic and often incapable of yielding sense, and they discovered allegories in them, or saw the secret revelation of a doctrine necessary to their salvation in words which had been coupled together by faithful translators at their wits' end. Think of the numbers who, by ingenious deductions, read their own

wishes or desires into a sibylline verse of the Scriptures. Or, not to leave the strict limits of literature, imagine this Book of Books, with its thousand strange and obscure expressions, accepted as the norm, developing the taste for broken, apocalyptic language.

Examples could be cited of countless passages in which piety or discretion impelled the English translators to render the Hebrew literally, without daring to introduce any meaning which they had not the wit to discover in their original. We will mention only the mysterious epithet "fearful in praises" applied to God in Exodus xv. ii., or the verse which in the Book of Job refers to the divine might, "If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him?" (Job xi. 10).

Probably assiduous reading of the Bible is largely responsible for the troubled and confused eloquence, interrupted by images violently subversive of logic, of which some English writers have been guilty. Fortunately, the dangers of following the scriptural model were combated by that great respect for strict reason which marked the classical period, already at hand, the period of analysis and ratiocination. Its first signs were perceptible when the Authorised Version appeared, and, after the Puritan Age, the reign of the understanding was established almost without contest. Two currents of thought, one mystical and the other rationalistic, flowed through the seventeenth century, and were sometimes separate and sometimes merged in each other. By 1611 the poetic fervour of the Renascence had cooled or been transformed. Bacon's work was a counterpoise to the Bible, or rather the practical and utilitarian spirit which led to the foundation of the Royal Society for Improving Natural Knowledge was balanced by the diffusion of biblical poetry.

The result was a literature which had a double inspiration and double aspect, the two being complementary rather than antagonistic to each other. It is due to the Bible that English was less deeply modified by analysis and by grammatical definition than French, then embarking, with Malherbe, the *Précieuses* and the grammarians, on the road to somewhat dry simplification. The Bible was the great force which perpetuated in English, even in English prose, elements of poetry and of quaintness and a certain *chiaroscuro*, and which also maintained in thought a mysticism and an imaginative ferment increasingly threatened by strict

rationalism. When it is remembered that Great Britain is the land of the Royal Society, Hobbes, Locke, Hume and Adam Smith, the economists and the utilitarians, the country in which the sense of the practical and the positive, implanted by the Normans, has perhaps taken deepest root, the immense importance is understood of the Bible which kept poetry alive, sometimes indeed at the expense of complete intellectual clarity.

6. *Philosophical Prose: Bacon.*[1]—Side by side with the religious literature, a secular literature, distinct from although not in conflict with it, was coming into existence and was concerned with philosophy and morals. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) never speaks of religion except with respect, and seems himself to have been religious, for he wrote several very beautiful prayers for his own use and professed the Anglican faith. But his work had no connection with theology or even with Christian morality. It is the product of a free spirit, of thought which adventures in new paths discovered by itself. He is the first in date of the English philosophers and one of the most eminent and characteristic of them. Moreover, he is one of the pioneers of modern philosophy in all countries.

The contrast between his great intellect and his mediocre character is one of the commonplaces of history. This client and friend of Essex who directed the legal proceedings against him, this lord chancellor of James I. who was obliged to acknowledge himself guilty of corrupt and abusive exercise of his office, could be summed up by Pope as "the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind." While it may be admitted that there were extenuating circumstances to excuse him, it is impossible to deny that he made friendship and uprightness subordinate to his career. This low ambition was, however, redeemed and ennobled by another, the desire to serve mankind by the search for truth. Very early, while still at Cambridge, Bacon realised the sterility of the scholastic studies which lead to verbal controversy but never to reality. He then conceived the idea of a mission beside which all the acts of his practical life sank almost to insignificance:

[1] Complete edition by Spedding, Ellis and Heath, 14 vols. (1857-74). *Philosophical Works*, ed. Robertson, 1 vol. (1905); *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. W. A. Wright, 5th ed. (1900). The *Essays* are constantly being edited. See also Abbott, *Bacon, an Account of His Life and Work* (1885); R. W. Church, *Bacon* (1884); J. Nichol, *Bacon* (1888-9); C. de Rémusat, *Bacon, sa vie, son temps et son influence jusqu'à nos jours* (1857); Ch. Adam, *Philosophie de Bacon* (1890).

I found in my own nature a special adaptation for the contemplation of truth. For I had a mind at once versatile enough for that most important object—I mean the recognition of similitudes—and at the same time sufficiently steady and concentrated for the observation of subtle shades of difference. I possessed a passion for research, a power of suspending judgement with patience, of meditating with pleasure, of assenting with caution, of correcting false impressions with readiness, and of arranging my thoughts with scrupulous pains. I had no hankering after novelty, no blind admiration for antiquity. Imposture in every shape I utterly detested. For all these reasons I considered that my nature and disposition had, as it were, a kind of kinship and connection with truth. (The original text is in Latin.)

His first object was to acquire the knowledge which increases man's empire over the earth. At thirty years old he wrote to Burleigh, "I have as vast contemplative ends as I have moderate civil ends; for I have taken all knowledge to be my province."

Little by little, he elaborated the doctrine which he formulated in 1620 in his *Novum Organum*. He declared science to be one, and to have a practical object.

We are concerned not with pure skill in speculation, but with real utility and the fortunes of the human race. . . . For man is no more than the servant and interpreter of Nature; what he does and what he knows is but that which he has observed of the order of Nature in act or in thought; beyond this he knows nothing and can do nothing. For the chain of causes cannot be relaxed or broken by any force, and Nature cannot be commanded except by being obeyed.

Since the obstacles to the attainment of this power, which depends on science, are ignorance and error, the causes are analysed of error or the tendencies to error existing in the human mind, and here given the Platonic name of idols of the intelligence. Bacon takes pleasure in subdividing these idols into those of the tribe, the cave, the market-place and the theatre, using a curious symbolism which bears the mark of the Elizabethan age. Then he determines the true method, establishing the importance of an objective attitude to nature, and the necessity of systematic experiment, and of caution against precipitate conclusion, "for the subtlety of nature is many times greater than the subtlety of our logic." The passage from particular facts to general laws should always be made by prudent and successive degrees.

True science is the knowledge of causes which Bacon, like Aristotle, divides into material and efficient causes in the physical, and formal and final causes in the metaphysical, sphere.

The search for the final cause leads to the corruption, rather than the progress, of science. Form is the true object of search, and is found in the fixed laws which rule bodies. It is the thing itself, the object in its relation to man and to his senses and understanding, as opposed to the object considered in its relations to the universe. These forms are limited in number and are the alphabet of nature. Therefore it is possible to hope that science and philosophy will in the future be complete. The great matter is to collect instances, that is facts, after which the inductive method can be followed with security. A beginning can be made with the hypothesis which yields the first "vintage."

Although Bacon may often go astray in his scientific researches while attempting to put his own method in practice, it remains none the less certain that his glorification of facts, the search for *them and their classification*, had a *powerful effect on English* thought, not, however, immediately, but after half a century. The Royal Society for Improving Natural Knowledge emanated from Bacon and was the means for the establishment of the Baconian spirit in the heart of the nation.

In the meanwhile, this man, who opened up new horizons to the understanding of his fellow-countrymen, who broke with the Middle Ages and made so bold a step forward into modern times, was chained to the past by his language. He was convinced that "these modern languages will at one time or other play the bankrowtes with books," and he entrusted his philosophy to Latin. His capital work *Instauratio magna* (1620-3) is written in Latin, as are the numerous scientific and philosophical pamphlets appended to it. Even when he wrote in English his *Essays*, which soon became popular, it was the Latin translation of them, "being in the universal language," which might, he judged, "last as long as books last."

It is therefore only in spite of himself that Bacon ranks among English prose-writers, and only in virtue of the least of his works, his *Essays*, his *Advancement of Learning*, his *History of Henry the Seventh*, his *Apophthegms New and Old*, his unfinished novel, the *New Atlantis*, and various treatises and pamphlets. One hundred years after Thomas More, whose masterpiece also was in Latin, he continued this tradition, but his attitude had less justification, since in his time every literary genre was exemplified in the national literature. It is the more

surprising because he could handle English prose so surely and vigorously that he became, in spite of himself, one of the first prose-writers of his country.

He cannot be said to owe this place to his *New Atlantis*, a painfully didactic and awkwardly written description of a new Utopia inhabited by scholars after Bacon's own heart. The most characteristic monument of the imaginary island is "Salomon's House," or the "College of the Six Days' Works," which is a sort of anticipation of the Royal Society and similarly destined to "the producing of great and marvellous works for the benefit of men." In its turrets for observing depth and height, and in its dissecting and vivisecting halls, audacious researches were conducted, some of which were afterwards realised, although the fantastic nature of others has become apparent. This novel is, in fact, Bacon's philosophy of science presented in romantic form by a writer without the gift for romance of which Thomas More received so fortunate a share.

The *History of Henry the Seventh* is stylistically much more remarkable. It was written to please James I. in praise of his ancestor, the first Tudor sovereign, but it has all the gravity suited to an historical work. Bacon's sagacity often appears in it, and was to show itself yet more clearly in the portraits of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth which he left behind him. No other favourable and admiring picture of the queen is as good.

It was, however, by his *Essays* that Bacon proved himself a great writer of his own language. Their title, although not their spirit, recalls Montaigne's masterpiece. While Montaigne is copious, homely, prodigal of confidences, interested in everything, prone to philosophise on whatever relates to man, Bacon is curt, almost sibylline, entirely impersonal and averse from pure speculation. He deduces general maxims only from the observations he has himself been able to make. He writes only for courtiers and statesmen like himself. His manner is intermediate between that of Montaigne's essays and that of the maxims of de la Rochefoucauld. He supplies short dissertations wholly sententious in form, supported by quotations from the ancients but founded on direct observation. The construction is stiff and formal. Like a good lawyer, Bacon, with an air of complete impartiality, balances opposing arguments before he draws his conclusion.

The essential merit lies in the density of the thought and expression, *the frequent brilliancy of the poetic images, inserted* never as ornaments but always to emphasise an idea, and the impressive loftiness of the oracular tone.

The moral is that set forth in the *Novum Organum*, and the design is practical and utilitarian. There are in fact two morals rather than one. Good for Bacon has a double character, according to whether it be considered relatively to the individual or to the state. He is strongly imbued with Machiavellism, and praises Machiavelli for describing not what men should do, but what they do. He is doubtless aware of the difference between virtue and interest. He declares that he is so, and that nothing is of as much worth as virtue. But it is the art of success among men which is the subject of his *Essays*. He points man to the part he should play on the stage of social life, as is indicated in the subtitle of his book: *Counsels Civil and Moral*. Baudouin, its first French translator, was right to call it *L'Artisan de la Fortune*.

Within these limits the *Essays* have singular force and weight. No one has ever produced a greater number of closely packed and striking formulas, loaded with practical wisdom. Many of them have become current as proverbs. Other maxims, either cast by Bacon directly or translated from his Latin, can be extracted from all his works and added to those in the *Essays*. The value of some depends entirely on their wisdom and its forcible expression:

> He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune, for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief.
>
> Children sweeten labours, but they make misfortunes more bitter. They increase the cares of life, but they mitigate the remembrance of death.
>
> Lookers-on many times see more than the gamesters.

Others are remarkable by their images, at once large and terse:

> Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark, and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other.

To show that religion is degraded by the shedding of blood, he says:

> *Surely this is to bring down the Holy Ghost, instead of the likeness of a dove, in the shape of a vulture or raven, and to set out of the barque of a Christian Church a flag of a barque of pirates and assassins.*

These *Essays* are the first in date of the classics of English prose, in the proper sense of the word. They are used as class-books almost as much as Shakespeare's plays. School-children learn from them to analyse their thoughts, to investigate the etymological sense of words—Bacon's words are weighted with their Latin meaning—and to formulate condensed reflections. The *Essays* also constitute a handbook of practical wisdom, enclosing in their shortest maxims an astonishing treasure of insight. There has been no more active stimulant to wit and the understanding. As compared with Hooker's great dialectical work, with its vast, developed argument and concentration on temporary and local disputes, the *Essays* are a compendium of precepts, or rather of reflections, which are true of all men, for all time and in all places.

7. *Two Eccentrics: Coryate and Burton*—Eccentricity was frequent in those days, but it is most apparent, though for very different reasons, in the writings of Coryate and Burton. Thomas Coryate (1577?-1627), a hurried traveller over Europe and Asia, has left a record of his wanderings in an amusing book called *Coryat's Crudities, hastily gobled up in Five Months Travells in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhetia, Helvetia, High Germania and the Netherlands* (1611). The author does not pretend to depth or method, but his keen curiosity has picked up a number of minute particulars on the customs of the age in many countries, which make his account not only entertaining but full of quaint information. To him is due the importation of forks, which he found already used by the Italians at their meals and was first to introduce into England. He mixes up truth and fiction, scepticism and credulity in a strange compound, the contempt of a Protestant for Catholics or infidels with the easy-going ways of a good-natured inquisitive rambler.

Of quite other intellectual calibre is Robert Burton (1576-1640),[1] an eccentric humanist. All the pedantry of the Renascence was poured into the *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), but vitalised by pervading humour. The author was a contemporary of Ben Jonson who left Oxford to become a country clergyman. He seems to have lived entirely among books, and he made his booty of Greek and Latin and of many modern authors. He was learned, knowing mathematics, astrology and land-surveying

[1] *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Shilleto (1893; reprinted 1904).

excellently well. His weapons against his gloomy, melancholy temper were scholarly jokes and the arduous work of collecting all the allusions to his affliction which his endless reading revealed. Had he followed his own inclination he would, like Bacon, have clothed his work in Latin, rather than "prostitute my muse in English." But since the "mercenary stationers" would have none of a book in the learned language, he had to fall back on the vulgar tongue. The result of his lengthy labours was an enormous quarto volume, followed, during the seventeenth century, by seven folio editions. The title is characteristic: *The Anatomy of Melancholy: What it is. With all the Kindes, Causes, Symptomes, Prognostickes and severall Cures of it. In Three Maine Partitions with their severall Sections, Members and Subsections, Philosophically, Medicinally, Historically, opened and cut up. By Democritus Junior.. With a Satyricall Preface Conducing to the following Discourse. Macrob. Omne meum, Nihil meum.*

The book contains indeed nothing which was Burton's own, for he pillaged all known books. Yet everything in it became his because he chose it and because his temperament infused into the whole a sort of unity.

His heroine, Melancholy, was not the gentle companion beloved of the romantics, the pensive maiden, contemplating the beauties of nature in sweet sadness and petting her own feelings, who was dearer than cheerfulness. To the men of the Renascence melancholy was a sickness; it was the *black distemper*, according to the strict Greek meaning of the word, and was the doctor's affair. The distance which separated melancholy from madness was short, and while Burton sometimes distinguishes between the two, he often confuses them.

The melancholy of Shakespeare's Jaques in *As You Like It* is a compound of moroseness, misanthropy, eccentricity, irony and sarcasm. It is softened only for a moment at the sight of a deer wounded to death, and this tenderness soon turns into satire against man. A fit precursor to Burton, Jaques goes on his way culling instances and proofs of human foolishness, madness and perversity. Shakespeare disowns him, finally letting Rosalind scoff at him and turn him out. If George Sand, adapting Shakespeare's comedy, made Jaques into the wise and beneficent philosopher of the piece, it was that Rousseau had formed her

mind and she could neither understand nor approve melancholy as it was conceived by a man of the Renascence.

Burton, Democritus Junior, devotes his book, which is as methodically constructed as a scholastic treatise, to an enumeration of all the forms which melancholy can assume to darken the life of man. He treats of religious melancholy, which the Puritans were beginning to exemplify, and of the melancholy of love-sickness. His *Anatomy* is in fact a vast picture of human folly. It echoes not only the attack of the ancient Democritus, but also the satires of antiquity, those, for instance, of Lucian, and also more recent invectives, Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools,* Erasmus's *Praise of Folly,* and, in part, More's *Utopia,* not to mention numerous sarcasms taken from Rabelais and Montaigne. "Thou shalt soon perceive that all the world is mad, that it is melancholy, dotes," and Burton finds that its madness recurs in all ages and countries, at all times of life and in every condition. Customs, uses, occupations, tastes, actions and words prove this abundantly. The existence of war bears overwhelming witness to it, and he dwells long on the madness of war, thus following More and anticipating La Bruyère and Swift, with less passion and eloquence than theirs, but with an extraordinary array of particular examples, annotations and quotations.

His reflections on his own country are curious. He first praises its prosperity and its learned king, James I., "another Numa, a second Augustus, a true Josiah." But he then shows the other side of the picture, the state of Ireland, which he calls a "dishonour to our nation," and of England, where the land seems to him uncultivated and miserable in comparison with industrious Holland. He declares idleness to be the scourge of England. "Idleness is the *malus Genius* of our nation." The Englishman will not work. Burton escapes from his grief to a Utopia, imagining a country in which every material improvement should have been effected. Yet he is not fantastic, but keeps clear of communism, ably defending the civil and ecclesiastical hierarchy.

In such digressions he shows himself a reasonable man, but more often his good sense is cloaked by eccentricity and his wisdom disguised as humour. This frenzied compiler, this scholar quoting endlessly, this writer of prose who recoups himself for his abstention from Latin by introducing numerous Latin

expressions into his sentences, does not take himself entirely seriously. On occasion he makes fun of himself and his brother pedants. He can scoff at antiquaries and philosophers as vivaciously as La Bruyère, and he can give away the tricks of his trade:

As Apothecaries we make new mixtures every day, pour out of one vessel into another; and as those old Romans robbed all the cities of the world; to set out their bad sited Rome, we skim off the cream of other men's wits, pick the choice flowers of their tilled gardens to set out our own sterile plots.

He exactly describes his own manner of writing. "As a River runs, sometimes precipitate and swift, then dull and slow; now direct, then *per ambages;* now deep, then shallow; now muddy, then clear; now broad, then narrow; doth my style flow." It is a style recognisable to a French reader who knows it in Rabelais and Montaigne. Perhaps it is with Rabelais that Burton has the most striking analogy of form, for both writers follow the curious method of emptying on to every statement their whole store of synonyms, letting fly all their epithets, compelled thereto by no necessity of meaning, but by their rather childish pleasure in displaying wealth of vocabulary, their joy in handling and feeling the words at their command.

In subject, on the other hand, Burton is much nearer to Montaigne. Although he professes to confine himself to melancholy, he reviews all the follies of man. Sometimes, when he intervenes directly and speaks of himself, relating his life or experiences, he is very close to the author of the *Essais.* His quotations, of which he has too many, do not distinguish him from the French writer, save that they are part of the very warp and woof of his style. But the rigorous divisions of the *Anatomy,* Burton's lack of a really definite and personal philosophy, his inferior penetration and his less free spirit, his fewer profound observations and greater share of pedantry and eccentricity, place him, in spite of everything, very much below Montaigne. He is more bookish, less spontaneous and keen, lets himself go less, and has not the same grace. The Frenchman walks the great highroad of students of morals and of society. Burton lives remote from beaten paths, in a hermitage of baroque construction, to which few to-day have access.

Yet this fantastic writer had in England lasting influence of a

sort. The numerous editions into which his book ran up to 1676 are proof of his success with two generations. In the eighteenth century he was forgotten and could be robbed with impunity, especially by the humorist Sterne. It was tempting to make a parade of knowledge by means of the wholesale spoliation of this great folio, neglected by everyone except Doctor Johnson, whose daily reading it was. In the nineteenth century Burton's reputation was revived by Charles Lamb, who rendered him a sort of cult, including miscellaneous extracts from his writings in *Curious Fragments*, and amusing himself by imitating his methods in his own essays.[1]

A little of Burton's eccentricity and pedantry marks nearly all the prose of these fifty years. It lacked the clear, even simplicity which to the French is the proper characteristic of true prose. It was not yet entirely distinct from poetry. But it was tending noticeably to conquer more and more ground. In spite of the resistance of Latin, it had extended its sphere to include more diverse subjects. It embraced theology; it touched on philosophy; it made definite conquest of literary criticism; and it annexed the moral essay and the "characters." It shared the elasticity of the novel, could be romantic, sentimental, realistic or comic. It had already an important part in the theatre. It had learnt to relate and to discuss. It could mock and it could be serious. When the poverty and uncertainty of prose before 1578 is remembered, its rapid progress is striking, and seems almost to equal the advance made by poetry. The victory of the Puritans interrupted its use for the literature, light and frivolous in form, which ceased to be produced until the Restoration, but the generation of the middle of this century used a prose which, while less diverse, attained in the higher kinds of literature to a magnificent development of those qualities of eloquence, strength and amplitude already apparent in some of the prose-writers we have reviewed.

[1] English literature has a partial claim to John Barclay (1582-1621), who was born at Pont-à-Mousson of a Scottish father and French mother, and wrote in Latin his picaresque romance, *Euphormionis Satyricon* (1603-7), and his more famous historical *roman à clef*, *Argenis* (1617), dedicated to Louis XIII. The latter work is, however, mainly concerned with France and had there its chief success, which gave an impulse to the pseudo-historical romances of the middle seventeenth century. In fact, Barclay was the typical cosmopolitan writer of the time, and his use of Latin, the only cosmopolitan language, is characteristic.

CHAPTER V

THE DRAMA UNTIL SHAKESPEARE, FROM 1580 TO 1592 [1]

1. *Fertility of the Drama. The Difficulty of Tracing its Evolution.*—Rich as are all the manifestations of the English literature of the Renascence, its highest glory and the most direct and original expression of the national genius are dramatic. Elsewhere imitation and artifice play a part; aristocratic sentiment or an ephemeral fashion is a check on spontaneity, ruling out whatever is of the people, or colouring style or subject to make it archaic, euphuistic, Arcadian or pastoral. On occasion, the greatest authors pride themselves on exclusiveness. Spenser writes with his eyes on the court, especially on its lords and ladies. Shakespeare, dazzled by the friendship of the young Earl of Southampton, heads *Venus and Adonis* with two arrogant lines from Ovid: "Let the mob admire what is vile; to me may fair Apollo serve cups filled with water of Castalia." The influence of antiquity and of foreign countries, especially Italy, is everywhere so noticeable, that only rarely do we receive an immediate and broad impression of the English genius. Everything bears a little the mark of a restricted public, a set or a coterie. The sonneteers, the anacreontic poets and the various humanists do not wholly belong to their country, but owe allegiance also to foreign writers who inspire them and whose rivals they are.

The theatre was open to all: the whole town was attracted by it and enthusiastic for it. It was truly national. For many it took the place of the church they neglected; to most, in this *time of no newspapers and few and little-read novels, it was the*

[1] General works: A. W. Ward, *History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (1899); F. E. Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama*, 2 vols. (1908); F G Fleay, *A Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama*, 2 vols. (1891); *A Chronicle History of the London Stage* (1880). For all Shakespeare's predecessors see Mézières, *Prédécesseurs et Contemporains de Shakespeare* (1863); E. S. Boas, *Shakespeare and His Predecessors* (1896); J A. Symonds, *Shakespeare's Predecessors* (1884); A. Symons, *Studies in the Elizabethan Drama* (1920). Many plays critically edited in the Belles-Lettres Series, G. P. Baker, general editor (Boston).

only source of intellectual pleasure. A secular temple, it provided from time to time a communion of patriotism instead of the old communion of faith. For while the insatiable curiosity of the public did indeed make a constant demand for stories of foreign countries, all they wanted of them was to be astonished, amused or scandalised. In order to please the English, the playwright had to produce scenes constructed for the English alone. He had to please everyone in his public, but his public was purely English. Never has any other audience been so stimulating to writers, who received their immediate reward in tears or laughter, noisy and multitudinous applause. And niggardly though the payment for plays might be, the demand for them was incessant. Whenever an author found his pocket empty, he knew that his best chance of filling it promptly was on the stage. Therefore all the authors wrote or tried to write for the theatre. There is hardly a poet or novelist of this period who did not at some time turn his attention to drama, not to speak of those who gave almost all their energies to it. Certain of them who, like Daniel and Drayton, had little gift for dramatic composition, attempted it only passingly and withdrew before their lack of success. But the number of those who never tried their hand at a play is small. Even Spenser wrote nine comedies, unfortunately lost; Sidney, indeed, produced no more than a court masque, but he gave such a large place in his *Defence of Poesie* to the popular drama which he despised as to prove its importance to the life of this century.

This is therefore the subject which the historian of the literature of the Renascence must study principally. It is also that most difficult to consider. The sixty-two years from 1580 to 1642 seem to present an inextricable confusion of plays, such a jungle of dramatic production as is very difficult to light up with ideas. It is a puzzle to find a principle of classification applicable to the thousand or so plays extant. To trace an unbroken evolution would be infinitely desirable, but a careful examination leaves no certainty that such exists. None but inevitable changes can be perceived. It may be that there was at the beginning greater freshness and artlessness, and that the dramatist then pulled his strings more awkwardly than when practice had taught him technical skill and given him both more ease and less conviction. But many exceptions would have to be made even to these cautious generalisations. Nothing is certain but the progress and the

decline of blank verse. Stiff at first, it gradually became pliable, then as free as was compatible with its rules, and finally from liberty it passed to nothingness. But there is on the whole no such passage from youth to middle age, and thence to decadence, as can form a thread for the history of the great ages of literature. The Renascence drama did not die a natural death. It was executed when it was still very much alive, so much so that the executioner was unequal to his task, and that twenty years later the alleged corpse was resuscitated, and promptly resumed, under the Restoration, a singularly active life.

The critic is, further, without the data and dates which would enable him to follow an evolution. He has to base his arguments on the extant plays without knowing how many have been lost. Thomas Heywood alone, who claims to have written 220 plays, left only thirty-five to posterity. The chronology of numerous dramatic works is purely conjectural. The life and character of the authors are almost entirely unknown. Many of them are no more than names, and there is no psychological certainty on which to rest the study of their works. The authorship of plays is very often uncertain. The habit of repeating and rearranging earlier works, that of the collaboration of playwrights—who worked at a play simultaneously or successively, or at one time simultaneously and at another successively: these factors complicate investigation over and over again. Will it ever be possible to unravel the tangle of Fletcher's work and Massinger's, Middleton's and Rowley's, Dekker's and Webster's?

It is impossible to follow with certainty the individual history of each playwright, or each company of actors who had a repertory, or each theatre which had a public. In spite of the considerable efforts which have been made, the unknown remains vaster than the known.

It would be tempting to make the classification by genres, to divide the plays into tragedies and comedies with their subsections, pure tragedy and tragi-comedy, historical drama, romantic and realistic comedy, pastoral comedy and comedy of manners and of character. But the distribution would have little correspondence with the realities of this drama which was wont purposely to mingle genres in one play, aiming at variety rather than harmony.

We are brought back to search for a central figure, and to

group about Shakespeare, incontestably the greatest of all, the constellation of his rivals—his predecessors, contemporaries and successors. While, however, there is much to be gained by subordinating everything to the master, it cannot be forgotten that several critics have claimed this central place for Ben Jonson, whose attitude to his fellow-dramatists is better known, whose theory of the drama is more clearly enunciated, and whose production was spread over a longer time, thirty-six years, from 1597 to 1633, as against the twenty-three years, from 1590 to 1613, for which Shakespeare wrote.

Whatever method be adopted, it is important to realise the swarming confusion which has to be reduced to order. On almost every day of these sixty years performances were simultaneously given in the London theatres of the most dissimilar plays belonging to the most various genres, plays already old, and plays which, more often by their subject or plot than by the really fresh mental attitude or change of method they indicated, were new. What the public desired up to the end was to feel again at each performance the emotions they knew or others like them, and if possible to have dished up for them a story which had not yet been staged.

2. *The Public Theatre. The Stage. The Actors.*[1]—It has been possible to elucidate the conditions of the tangible stage and those in which actors and playwrights lived better than the dramatic evolution. We have stated that the first public theatre was built on the confines of the city in 1576; by the end of the century there were some eight of them on the north and south side of the Thames, a surprising number for a town of hardly 200,000 inhabitants and a proof of the singular popularity of dramatic representations. These took place, for lack of means of lighting, in the afternoons, generally in buildings which externally were round or hexagonal. Within, the disposition of their space seems almost always to have been the same. A courtyard, open to the sky, was the pit; around this were two or three tiers of covered galleries; and in front of the pit a large protruding platform on trestles formed the stage. Two pillars in the middle of the platform upheld the ceiling; at the back, between two

[1] E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (1924); J. Q. Adams, *Shakesperean Playhouses* (1920); A. Feuillerat, *Le Bureau des Menus Plaisirs et la mise en scène à la cour d'Elizabeth* (1910).

doors used by the actors for their exits and entrances, another scene was overlooked by a balcony with windows, and before this back stage there was a movable curtain.

There were no wings and no back-scenery, and only the simplest accessories—table, chairs, bushes—to indicate or rather symbolise the place of the action. Sometimes it was merely intimated on a placard to such as could read. The front-stage served almost all purposes so long as it was not necessary to represent a special place. Many scenes in Elizabethan plays pass in a vague, indeterminate place, in a street or public square, before a house or in an unspecified room.

The back-stage was used for places which had a special and distinct character. The curtain at the back rose to discover persons in a particular attitude, for instance Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess in Prospero's cell.

The arrangement was in its outline taken from the mediæval stage, which included a vague place *(platæa)* and others which were defined *(sedes, domus, loca)*. The progress of the theatre in the seventeenth century brought the back-curtain more and more forward until it finally reached the front of the stage and the undefined part of the platform disappeared. Then it became possible to supersede the slight scenery of the back-stage with scenery which was erected behind the front-curtain and became increasingly multifarious, large and complicated.

On this almost naked stage the actor's person had a double importance. His costume was as rich as the stage was poor. Attention was entirely concentrated on his tragic gestures or grimaces. His declamation, in particular, was important, emphasising the value of the numerous monologues, the multiplied pointed tirades of the plays of the period. His art was therefore carried to a high pitch. English actors had at this time a reputation which reached the Continent, whither they were summoned and where some of them made long tours. There were no actresses: women's parts were played by boys. All the prestige which belongs to an actress went to the actors, and more than one citizen's wife was fascinated by them. Members of the Inns of Court and great gentlemen were proud of their intercourse with the profession, and in the taverns an actor cut a fine figure. Although they were almost outcasts from society, actors not only enjoyed popularity, but also were cultivated by persons

whose acquaintance was most flattering to their vanity. They had a good chance to make their fortunes if, amid the dangerous temptations of their calling, they lived an orderly life and preserved a practical point of view. If they had a share in the ownership of their theatre, they were prosperous and important men, enjoying much more consideration than the frequently starveling playwrights who tried to sell their plays to the companies.

Such an actors' company as that to which Shakespeare belonged, which was patronised in turn by Leicester, by Ferdinando, Lord Strange, who became Lord Derby in 1593, and by the Lord Chamberlain, and which became the King's Company at the accession of James I., was a veritable institution. We find it playing at the Bull's Inn, at the Theatre, the Curtain and the Rose, and at the Globe, built by this company for its own use in 1599. Under James I. it owned two playhouses, the Globe in Southwark, which was used in summer, and Blackfriars, almost within the city liberties, a covered theatre in which there were performances in the winter. This company was directed by the Burbages, father and son; by Richard Burbage, one of the most famous actors of the day, from 1597 to 1619. It had its struggles, some of them sharp, in particular with the Lord Admiral's Company and with the Children of the Chapel Royal, who captivated London for a time. But it triumphed over all rivals and retained its supremacy until the theatres were closed.

As for individual actors, the famous Edward Alleyn (1566-1626), who created the leading parts in Marlowe's plays, made his fortune so effectively as director of the Lord Admiral's Company, that he became master of the royal games and of the king's "bears, bulls and mastiff dogs," which were baited in the several rings, bought a manor from Lord Francis Calton for ten thousand pounds, very munificently founded on it Dulwich College which he endowed largely, and founded other charities also.

The passion for the theatre, which attracted money to it, gave rise to speculation. Thanks to his diary for the years from 1592 to 1603, we can follow in detail the investments of Philip Henslowe, Alleyn's father-in-law, a dealer and pawnbroker. As shrewd as he was illiterate, this capitalist bought plays from authors and sold them to actors. The price of a play varied from four to ten pounds. He advanced money to necessitous



Edward Alleyn, the actor-manager who created the rôle of Tamburlaine and who founded Dulwich College. Reproduced from the portrait in the Dulwich College Picture Gallery by permission of the Governor of Dulwich College.

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playwrights and sold stage-properties to the theatres. He built the Rose Theatre, and then the Fortune and the Hope theatres. Under Elizabeth he directed the Admiral's and Lord Worcester's companies, and under James I., when actors were no longer protected by noblemen and the surviving companies were under the patronage of members of the royal family, he was at the head of the Queen's and the Prince's Companies.

3. *The Plays. The Public.*[1]—In 1580 the theatres possessed a repertory of plays already studied and others like them. Because these disregarded rule, they provoked the ridicule or indignation of the literate, who compared them with the works of antiquity and blushed for the national barbarism. It was deplored as early as 1578 by George Whetstone, for all that he himself was the author of a sufficiently romantic play, *Promos and Cassandra.* Sidney repeated his strictures three or four years later in his *Defence of Poesie,* and added force and brilliancy to them. He passed sentence as a humanist on Gothic and popular productions, for although at heart he was, as his *Arcadia* proves, an extreme romantic, he no sooner became a critic than he was the docile disciple of Scaliger, Minturno, Castelvetro and their like. He confronted a drama which knew nothing of decorum with the law of the unities and the law which separates the tragic and the comic, and he energetically ridiculed the absurdities entailed by changes of scene and time:

> You shall have Asia of the one side, and Affrick of the other, and so many other under kingdoms, that the player when he comes in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now you shall have three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and by we hear news of a shipwreck in the same place, and then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the back of that, comes out a hideous monster with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave: while in the meantime two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field? Now of time, they are much more liberal. For ordinary it is that two young princes fall in love; after many traverses she is got with child, delivered of a fair boy: he is lost, groweth a man, falleth in love, and is ready to get another child, and all this in two hours' space.

Sidney has the penetration to perceive the law by which the English playwrights were unconsciously governed. They believed

[1] C. J. Sisson, *Le Goût public et le théatre élisabethain* (Dijon, 1922).

emselves to be historians, and followed events step by step, for-
tting the prerogatives of art which does not obey literal truth
nd which has the task of rearranging, eliminating, combining;
onstructing.

In this Sidney goes straight to the root of the matter. Quite artlessly, like the authors of the mysteries, the popular playwrights made it their business to distribute a story in scenes and to stage it. They had no conception of the necessity of a special plot, and in a large number of plays they did without one; and were thus able to produce a truly historical drama.

Sidney's condemnation would probably have been modified had he found artistic qualities of style in the drama which existed about 1580. The plays he had in mind were often ludicrous in form; the formula to which the poets conformed, one which masterpieces were soon to justify, suffered from this awkwardness. It was at the moment when Sidney was condemning contemporary drama that works were first performed which show, in spite of their defects, the evident signs of artistic labour. The capital contribution of humanism to the drama was the generalisa
tion of the use of blank verse, the sole great innovation which th
Renascence induced a conservative public to adopt universally.

More than the conscious will of the playwrights, the natu
of their public decided the dramatic system—if the word may
applied to the almost unconscious work of tradition—which p
vailed in England. The audiences who crowded into the El
bethan playhouses represented every class and every tr
Noblemen might, on occasion, be seen attending a perform
at Blackfriars, where the most fashionable audiences gath
But to all the playhouses there was an affluence of the gre
the lowly, the gentlemen and the people, the literate a
ignorant, the exquisites and the boors. Standing in the
people pressed against the stage, intervening between it
rich citizens and lords in their seats in the galleries. Ma
coxcombs, arrogant as a Molière marquis, sat on the r
the stage, chaffing the actors and getting into their w
playwright's duty was, like that of the author of a m
provide food for every palate.

Thus it was that no play was written for perform
public stage which did not combine contraries, pass fr
to extreme refinement. There were exqui

the audience who piqued themselves on their poetry and distilled subtle sonnets, and there were the groundlings, mainly attracted by the clowns and pronounced by Shakespeare to be "for the most part capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise." The great mass of the audience was, however, made up of simple folk, desirous of amusement yet willing to be edified or instructed, endowed with a curiosity at once ingenuous and ardent, and with imagination which easily moved them to tears or shouts of laughter. Neither squeamish nor sceptical, they blindly admired flights of lyricism which went beyond their comprehension, readily submitted to illusion and did not grudge their enjoyment. Such is a mixed popular audience in every country. It is an ideal, a grateful audience, perhaps the best fitted to appreciate the essentials of drama, namely the life and the human truth of its pictures.

It was the necessity of satisfying it which determined the character of the English drama of the Renascence. Its extreme variety gave birth to the profound difference which henceforth distinguished this drama from that of France.

Hitherto too much has been attributed to race as a factor determining this divergence. Men have liked to show English drama leading to Shakespeare as an inevitable effect of the national genius, of the need for vehemence, movement, variety, imagination and also brutality which was in the blood of the English. France is represented as having advanced in an opposite direction towards Racine, because the French race was in love with beautiful proportions, harmony, fine analysis and nobility. To this theory there is the objection that these two contrasting nations, which seem at this time to turn their backs on each other, shared throughout the Middle Ages a drama which differed for each of them only in points of detail. Both peoples were impassioned amateurs of the mysteries which in both their countries not only had the same religious subjects, but were also closely akin in form and in the spectacles they provided. Moreover, France in the Middle Ages seems to have taken the lead in this matter, and to have supplied the earliest dramatic models. How could she evolve out of herself what was less fitted to her own genius than to that of a neighbouring nation, England, which accepted and kept what she gave? How could she, analogously, build for centuries the most marvellous of all

the Gothic cathedrals before she recognised that her natural destiny was to repeat the peristyles and colonnades of Græco-Roman architecture?

The difference between the dramatic art of the two countries must be explained less ambitiously and more certainly. The fact is that France at the time of the Renascence had disinherited the old religious drama, the only really native and popular drama, while England still preserved almost all its elements. The difference was rather in the public of the theatre in the two countries than in the national temperaments. The English theatre was still open to all men and made for them all. But the drama of the French Renascence took form after a police regulation, intended to check disorder, had in 1548 forbidden in France any popular performances of the mysteries, and therefore it was both new and a thing apart. It was subject to no influences except those of antiquity, and its appeal was to a select public of humanists and literates, with a due admixture of pedants. Nothing was left to the people but the farces and the clowning of the fairs. What was at its origin shared indiscriminately by all the people of both countries, was in France cut for a long period in two halves, with the result that the court and the literate class, the men bred on Greek and Latin, engrossed all that was noblest, while the people had the rest. For it is improbable that there was ever a large number of workmen who understood *Cinna* and acclaimed *Mithridate*. It is no more than just to credit accident with what accident mainly accomplished.

Nor can it be doubted that in England there were velleities towards a break between the art of the aristocracy and of the people. The court was greedy of dramatic representation, and some playwrights addressed themselves to satisfying the more refined tastes of the queen and the courtiers. It was naturally at the court or before the court that truly artistic drama was first attempted. The popular theatre, left to itself, threatened to persevere in disorder and coarseness, and could still be careless of elegance and style. It is in plays written for the court that these qualities, without which drama can be intensely alive but cannot survive as literature, are first plainly discernible. Since there was at this time constant intercourse between the court and the city, actors passed from the one to the other, and the same play was often given before the queen and the people in turn, so

that progress stimulated by one audience was soon afterwards enjoyed by the other also. The benefit soon became general, but the search for the beautiful manifestly originated in the more cultured of the two spheres.

4. *The Plays of John Lyly.*[1]—John Lyly's plays were the first to provide models of refinement, or at least the first of all that have come down to us. For Lyly was not the first in date of the court purveyors. It is calculated that from the time of Elizabeth's accession seven plays were, on an average, given before her every year, and that about one hundred and fifty had been thus performed before Lyly's advent. Almost all of them have been lost except *Gorboduc* (1562), *Damon and Pythias* (1564) and *Tancred and Gismunda* (1586). We know of the rest only from the records of the Office of the Revels, the Master of the Revels having the duty of providing masques, dances and plays for the queen's diversion. He had to examine plays which were to be performed in her presence, whether written on purpose for her or chosen among such as had had a success with the public. Of the subsisting titles of the lost plays, so many are classical or mythological that their habitual subjects are revealed. There are synopses of masques which must have been mythological allegories of the same kind as most of Lyly's plays.

Lyly's success as author of *Euphues* and creator of euphuism seems immediately to have made him the accredited purveyor of court plays. His first play was indeed performed at Blackfriars Theatre before it was given in the queen's presence on 31 December, 1581, but it seems to have been written with a view to Elizabeth's pleasure, as were most of his later plays. Lyly writes as a wit catering for an audience which likes what is witty, a man of letters appealing to cultivated people, a courtier flattering his sovereign. He seems entirely regardless of any larger public. As a refined, even a mannered, writer, he addresses himself to fine lords and fair ladies. He gives them the treat of hearing, on the stage, the antithetic style and decorative similes of that prose which was, and which remained for some ten years, the admiration of the fashionable world. No work ever bore its

[1] Complete works edited by R. W. Bond, 3 vols. (1902). *Campaspe* is printed in Manly's *Specimens*, op. cit., vol. ii. For critical study see A. Feuillerat's important *John Lyly* (1910).

author's imprint more plainly than Lyly's. Each of his plays has a harmony and atmosphere proper to himself.

The most decided improvement due to him arose from his choice of prose as a medium, and a prose which, for all its artificiality, aimed at beauty. In face of the prevailing anarchy in the matter of literary form, he chose this one of the two solutions possible to him. He wrote too well, too elaborately and by too factitious methods, but in witty dialogue he attained to true art. His drama consists, for that matter, almost entirely of dialogue, for his plots are usually insignificant. His first known play, *Campaspe* (1581), is the work of a humanist whose matter is almost wholly taken from antiquity, but who remains independent in his construction. If precedents were to be found for it, they certainly would not be the comedies of the ancients, but rather the witty dialogues of Erasmus, and Lyly's pretext for uniting dialogues is a plot intended to eulogise Queen Elizabeth.

Alexander's love for his captive, the Theban Campaspe, is in conflict with his desire for glory and his consciousness of his royal duty. His love is crossed by that of Campaspe for the artist Apelles whom Alexander has commissioned to paint her portrait, and who, as he traces her features, falls in love with her. Some pretty sentimentalism, relieved by mythology, is occasioned.

Round about Alexander are argumentative soldiers and philosophers who give Lyly an opportunity for having certain historic aphorisms repeated on the stage. Alexander is confronted with Diogenes, the cynic, who rejects his advances and tells him some hard truths. Their conversations are real duels in which, amid the clash of swords, we hear almost all the famous retorts with which antiquity credits Diogenes.

These scenes are in pleasing juxtaposition to arguments between the slaves of the principal characters—Diogenes, Plato and Apelles—who meet in the market-place. The slaves' jokes are, it is true, mainly plays on words which betray the grammarian, yet they have a sufficient correspondence with the slaves' masters.

The play is witty and graceful and no more, but it is so in a high degree and consistently. Its euphuism, properly so called, is concentrated in the monologues, which are an exposition of Stoic morality, surprising in this ornate dress. Alexander, stand-

ing for Elizabeth, sacrifices his love to his duty as a sovereign and marries Campaspe to Apelles. There is little construction and no passion, only a series of fine-drawn conversations. Lyly wrote nothing wittier. In itself, as an example of an artificial genre, this play is exquisite, the only perfect thing produced before Shakespeare.

In the subsequent comedies the wit persists, but it is mingled with more fancy, and also, although the scene is again laid in antiquity, with some dreamy romanticism. In *Sapho and Phaon* there is again an allegory which flatters the queen, and more directly than before. Elizabeth's courtship by the Duke of Alençon is probably figured. Phaon, a poor boatman of Syracuse, is endowed, by a caprice of Venus, with unmatched beauty and rendered at the same time insensible to love. On the other hand, the goddess has pierced with an arrow the heart of the chaste Princess Sapho, of whose beauty she is jealous and whose chastity angers her. Sapho, crossing the water in the handsome ferryman's boat, falls deeply in love with him, and his heart also is touched in spite of his insensibility. He consults the Sibyl, who instructs him in the art of winning a woman's heart, and whose speech anticipates Shakespeare's Rosalind when she teaches Orlando how to court his beloved.

Sapho, languishing with love for Phaon, has him brought to her room on the pretext that he possesses a remedy which will cure her. The interview between the lovers is curious, endlessly mannered, yet charming in its concealment of a declaration beneath transparent play on words.

Yet Sapho laments. If Phaon love her, she must lower herself; if he be indifferent to her, she must die. She is saved by Venus, who too is captivated by Phaon and who deprives her of feeling. But the goddess fails to win the boatman's love. Her own child Cupid abandons her for Sapho, who inherits her power. And there is nothing left for poor Phaon to do but to leave Sicily, taking with him his cult of Sapho (Elizabeth) and his eternal love for her who is impervious to love, who has triumphed over Venus and is the mistress of Cupid.

Endymion (1586) has the merit that Lyly stages in it one of the most poetic of ancient myths which he does not rob of all its original grace. Manifestly this is another eulogy of Elizabeth, to be identified with Cynthia whom Endymion loves respectfully.

The allegory is, however, more complicated than those of the earlier plays and more difficult to elucidate. It has been too much a subject of discussion to allow the several suggested interpretations to be given here. Endymion, by the enchantment of Tellus, who is jealous of Cynthia, is overpowered by sleep. One of the most romantic scenes of Elizabethan drama is that in which his friend Eumenides arrives in Thessaly, the land of enchantments, in search of the charm which will awaken him. He reaches the banks of a prophetic spring of which the bed is visible only to faithful lovers, for they alone can read on it the word which will win them their heart's desire. Eumenides, who is the faithful and unfortunate lover of Semele, a lady of Cynthia's court, hesitates long. Shall he ask for the love of Semele or for the deliverance of Endymion? At last friendship and duty prevail over love, and he learns that a kiss from Cynthia will give back life to Endymion. Awakened after a sleep of forty years, Endymion, thanks to the kiss, recovers his youth and the right to continue his respectful courtship.

When about 1590 Lyly wrote *Midas,* he abandoned flattery for satire. The play is inspired by the disaster which had recently overtaken the Spanish Armada. Midas, having obtained from Bacchus that all he touches shall turn to gold, prefers Pan's song to Apollo's, and by Apollo is afflicted with asses' ears. It is not difficult to read in all this a parable of Philip II., ruined by his very wealth, rashly daring to rival Lesbos, or England, and beaten in his contest with the enemy island. The allusions are very plain. The play is hardly suited to the stage, since it lacks a plot, and its value depends mainly on the skilfulness of the allegory.

In *Gallathea* (1587) Lyly had emancipated himself from the necessity to be either flattering or satirical, and merely amused himself by playing variations on the theme of love. The play has two heroines, both disguised. Each has a father who passes her off as a man to save her from the Minotaur to whom the fairest maiden is offered every five years. So charming are these maidens in their pages' guise that they are loved by all Diana's nymphs. But they love only each other, each believing the other to be a boy. Venus unravels the tangle by changing one of them into a man.

The play has some very pretty motifs and certain elements

of poetry. The scene in which Cupid, masquerading as a nymph, uses his disguise to awaken love in all Diana's train, and is discovered by the angry goddess, who obliges him to undo his mischief, is attractive. That in which each of the two fathers assures the other that he has the more beautiful daughter is amusing, as is that in which young Hebe, momentarily threatened by the Minotaur, is saved because her beauty is judged inadequate, and does not know whether to rejoice at her safety or to mourn it.

But Lyly, as often happens to him, stops short in his best scenes. He goes only half-way, makes no more than a sketch. His work lacks movement, and what construction it has is too artificial, frozen by an excess of symmetry.

His last plays are pastorals like his *Gallathea*. *Love's Metamorphosis* shows three nymphs of Ceres, unmoved by the love of three shepherds and metamorphosed by Cupid, the first into a stone for her cruelty, the second into a flower for her coyness, and the third into a bird for her inconstancy. Cupid would restore them, at the prayer of Ceres, to their proper forms, but at first they refuse this service because they prefer ignorance of the ills of love and the unfaithfulness of man. They yield only to the boy-god's terrible threats, and even so they warn their lovers that the stone, the flower and the bird still live in their hearts.

In the *Woman in the Moone*, his only play in verse, Lyly reaches the point of satirising woman unreservedly. He repeats the ancient legend in his own way, imagining that when Pandora is created she receives from each of the seven planets something of its own nature: melancholy from Saturn, ambition and disdain from Jupiter, a warlike temper from Mars, kindness from the Sun, an amorous nature from Venus, falseness from Mercury, and madness from the Moon. Then Lyly amuses himself by showing Pandora influenced by each of these planets in succession. She ends within the sphere of the moon, where she is stationed at her own desire, all women being essentially "foolish, fickle, franticke, madde."

While Lyly usually drew on mythology and ancient history for his plays, once, in *Mother Bombie* (1587-9?), he tried his hand at a modern comedy in the Italian manner which has a much complicated plot. In spite of some pleasing passages, it

is weak work, without any of the necessary swing. It is in his court dramas that Lyly's characteristics must be sought.

Nothing else as artistic had yet been produced on the English stage. Lyly's composition has defects: there are weak moments in his plays and ineffective complications, a mingling of the serious and the comic which connects him with the popular drama but proves his inability to blend these opposites in one plot. While, however, there is a general lack of force, depth and true passion in his work, his language is invariably careful; his dialogue is artificial but pointed; retorts depend mainly on play on words, but are lively and well turned and have a courtliness; there is choiceness in his tone and mannerisms, originality in his subjects, even grace and fancy in his conceptions; and his work, exactly because of its artifice and its pedantry, is well fitted to the fashionable society for which it was written.

Lyly is a long way below Shakespeare, but none the less he anticipates him, the Shakespeare of *Love's Labour's Lost, Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado About Nothing* and especially *As You Like It*. He anticipates him yet more clearly if the charming songs of his comedies be not denied him. They appeared only in a posthumous edition of his works, and recent critics refuse to attribute them to him.

5. *George Peele.*[1]—Like Lyly, the prose-writer, George Peele, the poet (1558-98), began his career as a courtier. Like Lyly, he had a taste for ornament and cared for fine language. Although he acquired a reputation for wildness, became known for an incorrigible Bohemian, his upbringing was good. He went to Oxford and for some time he wrote for the court as a man of letters and refinement and a graceful poet.

The work which was apparently his first may be called a mythological pastoral, *The Arraignment of Paris*, which was played in 1580 before the queen, whom it greets in a concluding apotheosis. Diana revises the judgment of Paris in honour of Elizabeth, to whom she awards the apple. This pastoral has hardly any construction, but is very pleasing. Peele is a less witty and more poetic Lyly. No style was ever more bestrewed with flowers than his. In his play we see Flora causing nature to blossom on the spot where Diana is about to appear and paint-

[1] Complete works ed. by A. H. Bullen, 2 vols. (1888). Study by P. Cheffaud (Paris, 1913).

ing with flowers the portrait of Juno in yellow, Pallas in red and Venus in blue. Peele, who had lately read Spenser's *Shepheard's Calendar*, mingles mythological personages with rude, realistic shepherds. His taste is not infallible: Helen, by whose means Venus seeks to tempt Paris, is a real farm-girl, a fact which does not keep her from singing an Italian song. But these vagaries do not much spoil this fantasy. It is fragrant, lyrical, light and melodious.

The same love of decoration appears even in those of Peele's plays which were not written directly for the court. His *David and Bethsabe* is curious in this respect. Its subject gives it a place apart from other works as a link with the old religious plays. But it is differentiated from these by the spirit which animates it. Peele ignores the marvellous, knows neither God nor devil. He stages literally a passage from the Bible—2 Samuel xi.-xx.—on the pattern of the new historical dramas, treating Scripture as Shakespeare afterwards treated the chronicles.

The construction is awkward. Two stories, that of Bethsabe and that of Absalon, are developed side by side but without connection between them. The drama moves slowly. The play is cold, but the style is very careful. Peele's imagery is inspired by the Psalms and the Song of Songs, but all that in the Bible is great and strange becomes, when he handles it, pretty, decorative, precious, often commonplace and often unreal. Peele's descriptions are profusely flowery. It is tempting to apply to him the pretty line in his *Arraignment of Paris*—

Ye may ne see for peeping flowers the grass.

For the rest, he is so slavishly faithful to his source that he puts nothing into his characters which he does not find in the Old Testament. He neither explains them nor gives them life.

His authorship of the other plays which have been ascribed to him is uncertain. It is most probable that he wrote *Edward the First*, one of the plays on national history, and the *Old Wives' Tale*, a parody or satire on romantic comedies in which Milton found hints for his *Comus*. The weakness of his dramatic sense is yet more apparent in these plays. He was a poet little fitted to write anything for the stage except masques and lyrical pieces.

Neither Peele nor Lyly nor anyone else had achieved striking success on the public stage when suddenly, at some months' dis-

tance, the playhouses rang with the verse of Kyd and Marlowe. In swift succession, Kyd in 1586 produced his *Spanish Tragedie*, Marlowe in 1587 his *Tamburlaine*, an unknown author his *Arden of Feversham*, and a certain Hughes his *Misfortunes of Arthur*, the best tragedy on the classical model which had appeared since *Gorboduc*.

If then the artistic drama of the court had its beginning in 1580, it was in the years 1586 and 1587 that the drama of the public stage began its famous career, in which the most diverse genres had part. *Arden of Feversham* remained one of the best examples of the realistic and moral plays given in the city theatres. The *Spanish Tragedie* was for years the most popular of the gloomy, bloodthirsty romantic dramas of these theatres, while *Tamburlaine* was their surpassing heroic play, impressive by its sublimity and fitted to inspire admiration for the superman. If it be remembered that Lyly's *Endymion* was being performed at the same time, it must be acknowledged that English drama had shown even then not only her strength, but also her diversity.

6. "*Arden of Feversham*" (*1586*).[1]—At this early date it is a surprise to come upon a play which bears all the marks of dramatic maturity. The unknown author of *Arden of Feversham* was no great poet, but he had to an extraordinary extent a sense of the stage, the modern stage. He was in no degree a romantic. He dramatised a real and recent crime chronicled by Holinshed. His play is, in subject and form, a typical citizens' drama, in spite of its fitful use of fine language, its inclusion of some tirades which are characteristic of the Renascence and its use of blank verse. Its merit lies in its psychological truth and its character-drawing.

Alice, wife of the wealthy gentleman Arden of Feversham, has become the mistress of Mosbie, a countryman of low birth and coarse nature who inexplicably fascinates her. The two of them plot to murder her husband, she that she may belong only to Mosbie, he out of avarice. After several failures they contrive the murder successfully, but their crime is immediately discovered, and they and their accomplices are duly executed.

The play is fundamentally moral. It really makes adultery and murder odious, embellishing neither life nor vice. But it

[1] Printed by C. F. T. Brooke in *The Shakespeare Apocrypha* (1908).

reaches this effect not by sermonising, but by insight into the souls of the guilty, the tortures they undergo, and their meanness.

The husband is indeed drawn with a rather hesitating hand: he vacillates between jealousy and credulity, passes from just anger at the shamelessness of the lovers to a blind confidence inspired by his wife's blandishments. He seems to be aware of Mosbie's treachery and yet he takes him back into favour and declares him innocent. He speaks like an honourable man, and yet there is an episode in which, in order to round off his estate, he gets possession of a poor man's land. This indecision weakens the emotional effect in that it withdraws some sympathy from the victim, but it is also a signal proof of the realism of this playwright, who refused to create a hero, to make a crude contrast between vice and virtue.

In Mosbie's vileness there is no contradiction. He has not passion for an excuse. Throughout his love-making with Alice he slyly nurses a grudge against her, never loses his class-hatred, which she inflames by rash words when she is suffering twinges of remorse.

Alice is a prey to an irresistible passion which, in lucid moments, she vaguely suspects to be the effect of witchcraft. She is the soul of the play: her will leads to action, decides on the murder and plans it, because she wishes to belong unshared to Mosbie. But no sooner is the crime accomplished than the spell is broken. Alice is horrified by her own deed and dies repentant.

There are whole scenes between the two lovers which grip us by their truth and their forcible portrayal of the soul. In Act III. Scene v. Mosbie is shown uneasy about the consequences of the contemplated crime. He has been drinking to dull his faculties, but his anxiety persists. He realises that he is much less happy than he used to be, yet knows that the affair is in train and he cannot draw back, and so looks to the future. He must, *he tells himself, get rid of his accomplices, Alice as well as the* others, since he never could trust a woman who had betrayed her husband.

At this point Alice, just recovered from an access of remorse and religious feeling, arrives on the scene, carrying a prayer-book and irritated against her lover. She recalls her love for Arden in the days of her innocence, begs Mosbie to forget her, wishes

again to be a faithful wife. When he protests she overwhelms him with contempt, upbraiding him as a base artificer who has bewitched and corrupted her. He answers her insults with curses, tells her that for her sake he has lost his character, that instead of falling in love with a "wanton giglote" he might have married an honest maid "whose dowry would have weyed down all thy wealth." It is he who has been bewitched, but he has done with her. He sees her as she is, without beauty; he is maddened by the thought that he ever thought her fair. And thereupon Alice abuses herself, supplicates him, declares herself ready to burn her prayer-book; appeals to his love. Mortified and filled with mean resentment, he at first answers her ironically, thoughts of money mingling with all his thoughts of love:

O no, I am a base artificer;
My winges are feathered for a lowly flight.
Mosby? fy! no, not for a thousand pound.
Make love to you? why, 'tis unpardonable;
We beggers must not breathe where gentiles are.

Yet he gives in because it is in his interest to do so.

Even in the painting of the secondary characters there are powerful strokes. There is for instance a scene which depicts one of the nights for which the crime is planned. Arden is in a friend's house in London, and his servant Michael is to open the door to two murderers while his master is asleep. Michael is no vulgar wretch to be bought for money, but Alice has promised him that if he kills Arden or lets him be killed he shall marry Susan whom he loves. It happens, however, that he imagines the murder: he sees the assassins entering the house, slaying Arden, then saying to each other that it would be well to get rid of the servant who might betray them, and so preparing to stab him also. Upon this Michael utters in the darkness a terrible cry; his master is awakened, comes down to see what is the matter, and shuts the door which has been left open purposely. By Michael's cry he is saved for this time.

This dramatic force and truth of characterisation have led some to attribute the play to Shakespeare, assigning it to his early period. But it has a vulgarity of sentiment and atmosphere which cannot be reconciled with Shakespeare's work. None the less, it is a remarkable production, and stands first in a line of succession which was lost for some twelve years and then reap-

peared in dense and copious plays. The Elizabethan drama, generally romantic, could be unromantic also. There was a section of its public whose preference was for modern and topical subjects, and there were playwrights to satisfy these tastes.

7. *Thomas Kyd.*[1]—The majority, however, expected and desired romantic melodrama, and the first writer who supplied this demand was Thomas Kyd (1558-94) with his *Spanish Tragedie.* Nothing is known of Kyd save that he was the son of a London scrivener and studied law, and that Seneca's tragedies were his habitual reading. He bled Seneca white, and he translated Garnier's *Cornélie* which was modelled on Seneca.

So much can, at least, be deduced from a diatribe of Nashe's written in 1589. Seneca's influence on Kyd cannot be questioned, yet it did not cause his masterpiece to conform to the rules, as Thomas Hughes's *Misfortunes of Arthur,* which was played at Gray's Inn at the same time, did so conform, a play tragic and grave as could be desired and full of sententious dialogue. What Kyd learnt from Seneca was how to produce terror—by the ghost of his prologue who relates past events, by atrocious circumstances and by speeches heightened with striking lyrical expressions. He makes no attempt to simplify the construction of the popular drama, and he cares nothing for the unities. He takes from the Latin poet only what he thinks an English audience will assimilate, and leaves the loose, facile construction of the national drama intact. He owes to Seneca's *Thyestes* his theme of vengeance, one capable of producing the most pathetic and most fearful effects. He learns from him to envelop his whole work with an atmosphere of gloom, and adds the use of the most powerful stage expedients known to his own experience.

Young Horatio, son of the marshal Hieronimo and valiant as the Cid, is treacherously slain by Prince Balthazar and the perfidious Lorenzo at the very moment of exchanging love-vows with Bel-Imperia, daughter of the Duke of Castile. Bel-Imperia and Hieronimo swear to discover the murderers and avenge the deed. When the old father, who feigns madness in order to reach his ends and is indeed half-mad with grief, feels certain that he knows the murderers, he conceives the idea of having a play acted at the wedding of Bel-Imperia, who is obliged to

[1] *The Works of Thomas Kyd,* ed. Boas (Oxford, 1901). *The Spanish Tragedie* is printed in Manly's *Specimens,* op. cit., vol. ii.

marry her lover's murderer. This tragedy becomes a real one: everyone at the wedding kills himself or is killed.

Another story of revenge is a frame for this one. Before the action of the play begins, Don Andrea, Bel-Imperia's first lover, has been treacherously slain in the war with Portugal. His ghost opens the play, calling for vengeance on Prince Balthazar, who has put him to death.

A synopsis can give, however, only a poor idea of the horrors of this melodrama and the skill which made it a triumph. The fearfulness of crime is introduced into ardent, passionate scenes, making a contrast as violent as that between light and darkness. Horatio and Bel-Imperia are suddenly struck by love as he, the young warrior, is about to tell her of the death of Don Andrea, her betrothed. At once she gives him her heart. The lovers make a nocturnal assignation in the gardens of old Hieronimo, and there is a scene passionate as that between Hernani and Doña Sol, which is interrupted by the arrival of masked assassins who stab Horatio and hang his body in an arbour.

The sequel is even more horrible. Old Hieronimo, who has been awakened by Bel-Imperia's cries, comes through the shadows clad only in his shirt. He gropes his way, stumbles upon the corpse, and at this moment is joined by his wife, old Isabella. They mingle their tears and their vows for revenge. Hieronimo's final oath is in thirteen Latin hexameters, and it must have sounded like an incantation and have been as terrifying as it was incomprehensible.

Old Hieronimo's madness, whether true or feigned, overtakes him in strange accesses. He goes to demand justice of the king, and before all the court plunges his poniard in the ground. Since he is a judge, citizens petition him for justice, among them an old man who desires that his son's murder may be avenged. The judge is thereupon beside himself, draws from his breast a napkin stained with Horatio's blood, tears the plaintiff's petitions to pieces, and finally rushes from the room, crying "Run after, catch me, if you can." Almost at once he returns and mistakes the old father for his Horatio. Persuaded from this error, he believes the old man is a Fury exciting him to avenge, then recognises the old father's true identity and goes out arm in arm in his company. Certainly no one could be madder.

In the last scene, in which everyone is killed, Hieronimo confesses to the king what he has done. When the king threatens him with extreme torture, he bites out his tongue in order not to speak again. Then he beckons for a knife with which to mend his pen, and therewith adds to the bloodshed by stabbing the father of one of his son's murderers and killing himself. Don Andrea's ghost, which appears several times over to demand revenge, may well declare itself satisfied.

It was difficult to go much farther in melodrama. This one was so good that, in spite of all ironies and parodies, there was still a demand for it fifteen years after its first performance. Ben Jonson, the classicist, made additions to it, possibly those which have come down to us and which are certainly remarkable. They consist of new touches added to Hieronimo's madness and give the play the benefit of the improvement in dramatic psychology that had been made in the interval.

The play in its original form is emphatic, declamatory and often ridiculous, yet such as to grip a simple public. The motives for action are not made clear; the characters are alive yet hardly have character. It is the element of the pathetic which veils all defects. Of all the parts in Renascence drama, that of Hieronimo was the most grateful to actors and the most popular with the public. Moreover, the play supplies the poetry of place and scenery. It respects neither the unity of place nor that of time, yet preserves, on the whole, unity of action, and it also has unity of motive, for it all centres round revenge.

This excellent and most popular motive recurs in several of the great plays: the *Spanish Tragedie* foreshadows *Hamlet*. If the principal object of literary history were to determine starting-points, more space would be given to Kyd's play than to any of the great Shakespearian tragedies. Critics admit to-day that Kyd, whose other work is less interesting and is not certainly his, may have written an early and lost version of *Hamlet*. Such a play unquestionably existed in 1589, and it is likely that its author was the creator of old Hieronimo.

8. *Marlowe.*[1]—*Tamburlaine*, in its two parts, of which the

[1] His collected works have been edited by F. Cunningham, 1 vol. (Chatto and Windus); by A. H. Bullen in *The English Dramatists*, 3 vols. (1884-5); by Havelock Ellis in the Mermaid Series (1887); and by C. F. T. Brooke (Oxford, 1910).

first appeared in 1587 and the second in 1588, astonished the public for quite other reasons than the *Spanish Tragedie*. Its author was Christopher Marlowe (1564-93), a young man of twenty-three, who had just left Cambridge. He was entirely without experience of the stage, but he compensated for this lack by the extraordinary spirit of defiance and revolt which animated his dramatic work. Novel though *Arden of Feversham* and the *Spanish Tragedie* were, they were plays which bore the imprint of the traditional morality. From end to end they denounced and condemned crime; their murders cried out for vengeance. But the new playwright dared to claim admiration for the most bloodthirsty of men, to make of him a sort of demigod.

Nothing is more characteristic of Marlowe than his choice of his first hero. He had read a translation of Tamerlane's life by the Spaniard Pedro Mexia and another life of him by Perondinus of Florence. His imagination was inflamed by the story of the career of this unmatched adventurer who from a mere shepherd became the most powerful man in all the world. There was no need to invent: to follow history, or legend in the guise of authentic history, was enough. What were Alexander and Cæsar beside this fourteenth-century Tartar, the conqueror of Persia and Muscovy who laid Hindustan and Syria waste, vanquished the Ottomans, and died at last as he was flinging himself upon China at the head of two hundred thousand warriors? What cruelty did not seem mildness beside his, who strangled a hundred thousand captives before the walls of Delhi, and set up before Bagdad an obelisk built of ninety thousand severed heads? What symbol could strike more terror than the white tents and banners which stood, in sign of friendship, before a town on the first day of one of Tamerlane's sieges, the red tents and red flags which were there on the second day, in sign of pillage, and the banners and tents, all black, which beset it on the third day, in sign of extermination?

All this was so grandiose that Marlowe was dazzled. The man capable of so prodigious a destiny, of such unbridled contempt for human life, seemed to him a superior being, a superman

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Annotated editions: *Doctor Faustus*, ed. Ward, and *Edward II.*, ed. Tancock (Clarendon Press).

Critical Studies: C. P. Baker, *Dramatic Technique in Marlowe* (1913); Danchin, "Etudes critiques sur C. Marlowe," in *Revue germanique* (Jan.-Feb. 1912, Nov.-Dec. 1913, Jan.-Feb. 1914); *C. Marlowe*, by Miss Ellis-Fermor (London, 1927).

to whom the petty rules of morality did not apply. His Tamburlaine massacres wholesale, women and children as well as men, laughs at the blood he sheds, imprisons the vanquished Emperor Bajazet in a cage, has his chariot drawn by kings whom he insults, burns a town in honour of the funeral of his wife, Zenocrate, and all the while remains entirely admirable, outside and above human judgment. He is the despiser of men and gods. Marlowe endows him with the boundless arrogance of an emancipated virtuoso and philosopher of the Renascence. Tamburlaine is the great victor, the conqueror of the world. Therefore he is in the right.

Marlowe transfigures him, not by omitting or weakening any of his atrocities, but by exalting them. He sees in him the triumph of the will to power and thinks that nothing could be finer. To glorify his Tamburlaine he goes to the romances of chivalry in search of heroes moved by an unbridled appetite for glory, and there finds the poetry a mere exterminator would lack. Like those extravagant knights, Tamburlaine is capable of extraordinary love. He lays the earth at the feet of his Zenocrate and when death takes her from him he threatens Heaven with his rage.

This play, which is simply Tamburlaine's life divided into scenes, expresses the strange ardours of a young scholar who had cut himself irrevocably adrift from all restraint. A libertine in both senses of the word, Marlowe prided himself on his paganism, his rebellion, not against the dogma of the Trinity only, but against the very spirit of Christianity. His ideal was the man freed from all morality who seeks the maximum of strength and enjoyment by way of impiety, sensuality and crime. What he could not declare to the public directly, he makes his Tamburlaine proclaim upon the stage. It was to the quest of the impossible that he himself aspired, and Tamburlaine is vowed to it at his first meeting with Zenocrate. She has come to him, all dishevelled and disconsolate, to ask him to pardon her father, the Sultan of Egypt. At this moment the man who had, an instant before, slaughtered the suppliant virgins of Damascus and had their corpses hoisted on pikes, utters the most lyrical of appeals to absolute beauty, a cry of grief because he knows and declares that what he calls upon is beyond his reach.

The like exaltation had already been felt by Tamburlaine at

the thought of being king. On the precedent of Jupiter, who ousted his father Saturn from the throne in order to reign himself, Tamburlaine regards ambition as the spontaneous act of human nature:

> Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
> And always moving as the restless spheres.

The same wild rapture is sustained through ten acts, for two dramas are consecrated to this one hero Tamburlaine, who is almost always on the stage and by himself is nearly the whole of either play. It is appalling to reflect on the task of Alleyn, the actor who created the part and who had to utter all this character's declamatory violence and repeated lyrical tirades. Nothing could be less dramatic or more monotonous: the same theme and same tone of passionate emphasis recur endlessly. It is true that, to captivate the sight, there are some scenes which haunted men's memories: Bajazet dying of hunger in his cage while a banquet is served to Tamburlaine, who tenders him a mouthful or two on the point of his sword; Bajazet, at the end of his endurance, braining himself against the iron bars which imprison him; his wife, Zabina, seized by madness when she sees him dead and taking her own life; above all that famous spectacle of Tamburlaine, whip in hand, drawn by two kings harnessed to his chariot to whom he cries:

> Holla, ye pamper'd jades of Asia!
> What, can ye draw but twenty miles a day?

It was never necessary to parody *Tamburlaine:* to mention it was enough. On the whole, its spectacular extravagances are dispersed, but the declamation is continuous. That men listened to this play from end to end can be explained only by supposing that the fire in the heart of the young poet caught his audience. They too must have been in a state of half-delirious exaltation. The distraught rhetoric is sustained by verse of which the unfailing sonority was as new as the subject. Marlowe began his career with a superb contempt for the popular rhymesters. He makes blank verse, hitherto without brightness or ring, thunder and echo through his play like a drum that never ceases. Other heroes, from the Herod of the mysteries downwards, had already uttered fearful blasphemies and unending rodomontade,

but they had had to express them in slight stanzas or frail couplets. The verse for which men had been waiting, completely formed verse, now sounded on the stage for the first time. It was a thing too prestigious to be withstood. The wits might mock at this "spacious volubilitie of a drumming decasyllabon," at this "bragging blank verse," but, whether they would or no, they had soon, in deference to the public, themselves to beat the drum as well as they could.

The madcap was in truth a great poet whose very extravagance was justified because it expressed his nature. He produced play after play, all continuations of his first. They were perhaps less purely the expression of his temperament, but they gained by his increasing knowledge of the stage, which did not prevent them from being still mainly lyrical and oratorical. He was, however, leading a life of intense dissipation which hardly ever left him time to produce a complete work like *Tamburlaine*. He became the improviser who flings a couple of powerful scenes into a botched play.

Such was the composition of the *Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1588), for which he drew on one of the most fruitful of legends, but merely built an admirable framework about scenes hardly written, and clowning which reads as though the actors had been invited to fill it in as they chose.

Once more faithful to the custom of his country's stage, Marlowe divided the German legend of Faust, as he had read it, into scenes. His forceful egoism is projected into the character of the necromancer who vows himself to the devil in return for sovereign knowledge and sovereign power, and who is thus able for twenty-four years to satisfy his appetites. They are poor and coarse enough in the legend, leading him mainly to play practical jokes on the great ones of his day, the pope and the cardinals, and to make poor wretches the butt of his magic. Marlowe takes little interest in these distractions, which he barely outlines. But when Faustus evokes the spirits of the past and obtains a vision of the Greek Helen, the poet, imagining her supreme beauty, is rapt to incomparable lyricism.

Retribution follows: Faustus has to keep his bargain with Lucifer, and tremblingly awaits death and hell. Marlowe, the atheist, alone in a Christian world, must also, at times, have felt to the full the horror of his denials and his blasphemies. He

was too near faith to be indifferent. The very vehemence of his professions of impiety was a sign that his emancipation was incomplete. He shook his fist at Heaven and feared at the same moment that Heaven might fall and crush him. The last scenes of *Faustus* are among the most pathetic and most grandiose in Renascence drama. They stand by themselves, distinct from all the rest of this drama. They are unsurpassable, even by Shakespeare. Marlowe, incapable of a whole masterpiece, yet had genius to reach, here and there, the sublime beauty which has no degrees. When Goethe took the same legend for the basis of one of the chief accomplishments of modern poetry, he could not eclipse the poignant greatness of his forerunner's scenes. He, who did not know how the impious tremble, could not recapture that anguish of horror.

Marlowe never again found a plot which gave him so much scope, but even in the *Jew of Malta* (1589) he sometimes reveals his lyrical power. He was doubtless led to write this melodrama by the success of the *Spanish Tragedie* and other tragedies of atrocious vengeance. His Jew, Barabas, is unjustly deprived of his goods by Christians, and by an extraordinary series of crimes avenges himself on them, and also, becoming a monomaniac, on mankind in general. Obliged to use cunning to attain his object, he is Machiavellism incarnate. His crimes must have made the hair of audiences stand on end. They accumulate until, having first delivered Malta to the Turks and then the Turks to the Christians, he falls into a cauldron of boiling water into which he had schemed to throw his last enemies.

There is only one other character who counts in this play, and he is yet more terrible, the Moorish slave Ithamore who is Barabas's tool and an incarnation of the lust of extreme cruelty.

This melodrama opens grandly, and before the Jew becomes a criminal maniac he has, like Tamburlaine, dignity and greatness. Enormously rich, we see him first in his counting-house, with heaps of gold before him, a poet intoxicated by the immensity of his own wealth and the immense power which is its consequence. As he enumerates the countries whence his treasures come, his exaltation has a mystical greatness. Something of this remains to him when he hears the governor's order that half his estate and that of the other Jews shall be confiscated to pay the tribute to the Turks, and when only he of all his co-religion-

ists keeps his pride, remaining indignant and inflexible. It has often been said that Shakespeare dared to defy contemporary prejudice by attracting sympathy intermittently to Shylock. Yet Shakespeare's Shylock is as avaricious as he is cruel, and ridiculous through his avarice. The only true rehabilitation of the Jew is that which Marlowe attempted in his first act, where the haughty, intrepid Barabas, facing the hypocritical governor, is really a splendid figure. That he subsequently appears as a frenzied wretch is of little consequence. For a time the poet identified himself with the Jew, who may even, by the very enormity of his later crimes, have retained the strange sympathy of his creator.

Besides an unfinished play, the *Massacre at Paris,* on the massacre of St. Bartholomew, a subject which gave Marlowe his fill of horrors and attracted him by the boundless ambition of the Duke of Guise whom he made his hero, he wrote a *Dido,* which was finished by Nashe and in which he dramatised the Fourth Book of the Æneid. This play is less sombre in colour than his earlier work, but is marred in places by the worst lapses of taste. Marlowe was also able, before he died at the age of twenty-nine, to write the best of the tragedies on national history which preceded Shakespeare's, his *Edward the Second,* first acted in 1592.

Whether because Marlowe's genius had developed, or because the exigencies of historical drama obliged him to self-effacement, this play has qualities which are properly dramatic and are found in none of its predecessors. The lyrical declamation is under a new restraint. The tirades are shorter and the dialogue is better distributed in speeches. The blank verse is less strained and more pliable, nearer to the tones of the human voice. Progress in character-study is also evinced, over a numerous and diversified cast.

The subject is the truthful history of a king who is dominated by his favourites, first Gaveston and then young Mortimer. Mortimer reaches an understanding with Queen Isabella, who becomes his mistress. The betrayed king is cast into prison and put to death by the order of the two accomplices, who are in their turn executed by their victim's son.

Edward II. stands for sentimental weakness, the royal baseness which cowardice can make bloodthirsty. In Mortimer, with

his unbridled ambition, Marlowe returned to one of his favourite types, and it is Mortimer who connects this play with its predecessors.

Except the death of Faustus, nothing in Marlowe's plays is more poignantly pathetic than the scene of the murder of Edward II. in Killingworth Castle by two ruffians. The end of the bad king is so miserable that he becomes an object of pity.

Edward the Second is better constructed than Marlowe's other plays, free from his habitual extravagance, humanised and less removed from contemporary drama at its average. But it shows the author's dramatic weakness the more clearly because of its very merits. This tragedy has not the lucidity necessary to character-drawing, to the weaving of a plot and to the distribution of sympathy. It also lacks variety and dramatic progression. Of the plays devoted to national history, it was, until Shakespeare, the most artistic, but a long distance separates it from the least of Shakespeare's historical dramas. The spirit of patriotism necessary to a work of the kind does not breathe in it, possibly because Marlowe, a rebel against the religion and morality of his fellow-countrymen, did not share their political passions either. Again in this play, he shows himself in revolt against the common morality, when, with lyrical exaltation, he paints the unnatural love of Edward II. for his favourite Piers Gaveston.

Marlowe added nothing to dramatic technique saving that he determined the victory of blank verse. His merit is that in his short career he set the stage on fire with the flame of his passion. Less versatile than the other prominent playwrights of his day, less able than they to conceive of multitudinous feelings distinct from his own emotions, less quick than some to catch the scenic side of things, surpassed not only by the masters, but also by mediocre playwrights, as an architect of drama and constructor of pliable and nimble dialogue, without any sense of the comic or sense of humour or any aptitude to draw a woman, Marlowe yet possessed a supreme quality which enabled him at once to lift drama into the sphere of high literature. He was a great poet, a lyrical, personal, violently egoistical poet, who carried with him his own unique conception of man and life. In spite of his atheism, he foreshadowed Milton from afar; a little of him was in the Byron who wrote *Cain*, a little in Shelley. His exclusiveness produced intensity, and the English stage was in great need of

intensity. Grace, wit and fancy had been scattered on it, mingled indeed with faults of every kind, but never hitherto had it known this dash, this vehemence, animating a whole play, this rapid march, as to victory, by which drama inspires the conviction that thus to move is to be alive.

It is, after all, a mistake to suppose that every work written for the stage must have specially dramatic qualities. To give an audience an impression of greatness, to cause them to tremble with enthusiasm and feel the rush towards an end—any end: this does as well. The fact is proved by Marlowe's work as by part of Corneille's. His immediate success and his powerful influence are unquestionable. Even when his plays had come to seem extravagant they remained popular. They first made the English public feel the pride of strength, and persuaded or deluded English drama into the belief that it equalled the sublimity of the ancients. As did the *Cid*, Marlowe's plays, for all their lack of patriotism, made hearts swell with a new national pride. His characters, out of scale and unnatural as they are, can dispense with probability because they have the breath of life. Their *passionate declaiming, as well as the triumph over the Armada*, one year after Marlowe's first play, and the pride in distant conquests, made English hearts drunk and giddy with triumphant strength. Together with the discoveries of the great seafarers, these figures on the stage enlarged, in men's minds, the bounds of the possible. These plays were a pæan to the infinity of military power, of knowledge and of wealth. The subjects Marlowe borrowed, the heroes he moulded, were no more than his mouthpieces, voicing his exorbitant dreams. Like him they sought the infinite and like him were never sated.

9. *Robert Greene.*[1]—The success of the *Spanish Tragedie* and of *Tamburlaine* took the usual purveyors of the popular stage by surprise. Their astonishment and anger are attested by the young English Juvenal, Thomas Nashe (1567-1601), who from the age of twenty was one of the group of young writing-men from the universities who did the actors the great

[1] *Complete Works*, ed. Grosart, 15 vols. (1881-6); *Dramatic and Poetic Works of R. Greene and G. Peele*, ed. A. Dyce, 2nd ed. (1879); *Plays*, ed. Dickinson (Mermaid Series, 1909); *James IV.*, by R. Greene, printed in Manly's *Specimens*, op. cit.; T. Lodge, *Complete Works* (except translations), ed. Gosse (Glasgow, 4 vols, 1872-82); *The Wounds of Civil War*, in Hazlitt's Dodsley, op. cit., vol. vii.; Thomas Nashe, *Complete Works*, ed. Grosart, 6 vols. (1883-5); *Works*, ed. McKerrow, 4 vols. 1904-8).

honour of working for them. Lyly and Peele, who looked especially to the court, were somewhat loosely attached to this group. Thomas Lodge (1558?-1625) was rather connected with the public stage, which he had undertaken to defend against Gosson. He wrote about 1589 a mediocre play on the struggle between Marius and Sulla called *The Wounds of Civil War*. As for Robert Greene (1560?-1592), he was at this time turning all his energies from the novel to drama, and with Lodge he wrote, in the old didactic manner, a sort of miracle-play called *A Looking-Glass for London and England*.

As an effect of the triumph of Marlowe and Kyd, Lodge was, before long, deflected from the stage, and bade it a disdainful farewell in 1589, resolved

> To write no more of that whence shame doth grow,
> [Nor] tie my pen to pennie-knaves delight.

But Greene persisted and was obliged to conform to the altered taste. His *Alphonsus* and his *Orlando Furioso* are extravagant and declamatory enough to recall *Tamburlaine*, but bear no marks of genius. It is possible to doubt whether *Alphonsus* be an imitation of Marlowe's famous play or a parody on it.

Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* is another *Faustus*, called into being by the success of that play. Greene's conformity to the changed demand is, however, only apparent. His personal vein subsists, with its charm, and forms an essential contribution to the preparation for Shakespeare's work.

This element, which is Greene's own, is manifest in two plays which, among those attributed to him, were certainly written by him and which seem to have been his last works for the stage, *Friar Bacon* and *James the Fourth*.

The title of *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* is misleading, for it is applicable only to the secondary part of the play, in which Greene rivals *Faustus* in exhibiting the tricks played upon each other by two magicians. But side by side with this mediocre comedy there is an idyllic play on a romantic theme which often is very graceful.

Edward, Prince of Wales—a prince unknown to history—comes upon Margaret, a keeper's daughter and the belle of Fressingfield, in her dairy, and falls in love with her as she hands him a cup of milk. He commissions Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, to act

as his go-between and win him the girl's heart that he may make her his mistress. Lacy discharges his trust with so much goodwill that he himself comes to love Margaret and is loved by her. At first the prince is furious and would kill the traitor, but he ends by forgiving him and uniting the lovers. The prince thus plays a part analogous to that of Alexander in Lyly's *Campaspe*. Lacy, however, wishing to try his peasant love, pretends that the king is obliging him to marry a Spanish lady. Margaret, in despair, is about to become a nun when Lacy reappears, conquers her for the second time, and marries his Griselda.

In spite of its abundant use of mythological figures, this idyll has much grace and freshness. Country air blows through it. The most charming scene is undoubtedly that in which the Prince of Wales relates how he has lost his heart to the dairymaid. He is a very young man, enthusiastic and cultivated, to whom mythological reminiscences are a natural aid to the expression of love. The character of Margaret, really a pure girl in love, has no precedent in drama. Nashe, with his usual verbal excess, calls his friend "the Homer of Women," and certainly it was Greene who, first of playwrights and before Shakespeare, had the qualities of tenderness and grace necessary to paint a pure, loving woman.

In his pseudo-historical play, *the Scottish History of James the Fourth, slain at Flodden*, in truth a stage-version of an Italian story told in Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* (first *novella* in the third decade), Greene has drawn two very charming portraits of women. His James IV. marries Dorothea, daughter of the king of England, but loves Ida, daughter of the Countess of Arran. Rejected by Ida, who is too virtuous to be his mistress, he tries to compass his wife's death. She is, however, not killed, only wounded, and instead of bearing malice, she intervenes in time to save her faithless husband at the moment when ruin threatens him through the war which the English king wages to avenge his daughter.

Another charming scene is that in which Ida is tempted by a certain Ateukin, the tool of James IV. He finds her sitting with her mother in the porch of their castle, both women busy with needlework. The conversation of the mother and daughter, before he arrives, is full of the honesty and simple happiness of dutiful, unambitious persons. Ida answers Ateukin's offers in

words both candid and noble. Virtuous as she is, his revelation of vice astonishes her:

> O, how he talks, as if he should not die!

In Dorothea, Griselda is once more recalled, but she is also a first sketch for Shakespeare's heroines—Julia, Viola, Imogen. When she learns that her husband has signed her death-warrant, and is urged to summon her father, the king of England, to her aid, she cries:

> As if they kill not me, who with him fight!
> As if his breast be touched, I am not wounded!
> As if he wailed, my joys were not confounded!
> We are one heart, though rent by hate in twain;
> One soul, one essence doth our weal contain:
> What, then, can conquer him, that kills not me?

This pathetic scene ends in charming fancifulness, Dorothea, disguised as a man, fleeing with her dwarf Nano, and smiling through her tears at her own strange figure. She reaches a wood when she is weary and is consoled by Nano, who is as faithful but not as sarcastic as Lear's fool. We think of Rosalind arriving with the fool Touchstone in the Forest of Arden.

Greene, by his taste for the romantic and his moments of tenderness, foreshadows Shakespeare, as does Lyly by his wit, the author of *Arden of Feversham* by his psychological sense, Kyd by his tragic atmosphere, and Marlowe by his lyrical eloquence. These various gifts had yet to be united in one man and one work. Shakespeare was to gather them together and to enhance them.

CHAPTER VI

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS[1] (1590-1616)

1. *The Advent of Shakespeare.*—The relation of Shakespeare's play to contemporary drama is the first problem connected with them which confronts the historian of literature, and the only one he can treat with the necessary fullness. For to study each of these thirty-six plays, distinct and truly independent of èach other as they are, on a scale proportionate to its value and importance would be impossible where space is necessarily restricted. We can here attempt no more than the discovery of the points at which Shakespeare connects with his rivals and those at which he dominates them.

His first appearance in literary history is curious and sig-

[1] Life: Halliwell-Phillips, *Life of William Shakespeare*, 2 vols., 7th ed. (1887); W. J. Rolfe, *A Life of Shakespeare* (1902), C. I. Elton, *William Shakespeare, His Family and Friends* (1904); Sidney Lee, *A Life of Shakespeare*, new ed. (1922); J. Q Adams, *Life of William Shakespeare* (1923)

Editions of the Text: Reprints and facsimiles of the 1623 folio and the quarto editions. Complete annotated edition: *Cambridge Shakespeare*, 9 vols, 2 eds. 1891-3); Furness, *New Variorum Shakespeare* (1871 et seq., unfinished); Furni- [illegible]

[illegible] *ly of Shakespeare* (1880); B. Wen- [illegible] ite, *Studies in Shakespeare*, 9th ed. 1911); A. H Thorndike, *The Influ-* [illegible] (1904), Stoll's study on "Falstaff" [illegible] Bulletin of University of Minnesota, [illegible]); B. Matthews, *Shakespeare as a Playwright* (1 [illegible] (1919); Stendhal, *Rac* [illegible] *n Temps* (1852); Mézi [illegible] Hugo, *William Shak* [illegible] Darmesteter, *Shakesp* [illegible] *kespeari-enne* (1915); [illegible] etc.

nificant. Nashe and his friends, the company of young humanists known as the University Wits, had hardly recovered from Marlowe's sudden triumph, when they were faced with another and more dangerous rival who sprang from a different world. Marlowe, Master of Arts of Cambridge, was after all one of themselves, and when once they had exclaimed against his arrogance, it did not take them long to follow in his footsteps. He was a new and a brilliant recruit for their group. But danger now threatened them from the world of the actors, from the ignoramuses whom they were wont to regard as barely able to declaim the fine passages written for them by men of letters. A well-known actors' company, the Lord Chamberlain's, were snapping their fingers at the manuscripts of the university men, the accredited producers of fine literature. An actor was taking it upon himself to write, was reshaping, clipping, adding to his company's repertory, and fashioning it anew when he did not create whole plays. Greene, who was near his end and whose sight was sharpened by jealousy, discovered the enemy, and in 1592 pointed out to his fellows that "there is an upstart crowe beautified with our feathers that with his

Tyger's heart wrapt in a player's hide

supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute *Johannes fac totum* is in his owne conceit the onelie Shake-scene in the countrie."

So great was the danger that Greene advised his colleagues, Marlowe among them, to abandon the playwrights' profession. To stay in it would be to lose their time and trouble as well as their souls.

The man who was thus denounced was William Shakespeare, born in 1564, and now twenty-eight years old. Following on a period of obscurity, he was at this time enjoying a fair reputation with the actors' company to which he belonged, and his plays were being well enough received to render the most vaunted dramatists uneasy. He had been in London for five or six years, having been driven thither from the small town of his birth, Stratford-on-Avon, as much by poverty as by a passion for adventure and for the stage. It was his intention to supply the needs of his father, whose business was not thriving, of the wife he had rashly married when he was only eighteen, and of his three chil-

dren. His education had been haphazard, as much a matter of *miscellaneous*, ardent reading as the result of his attendance at Stratford grammar-school, and he might well seem ignorant to Masters and Bachelors of Arts of the two universities. He had nothing behind him except his natural genius and his daily experience of the stage. He had no theory of literature, only the desire to interest the public, and a talent so flexible that it immediately adapted itself to every genre and imitated every note on which a poet had ever played.

There is some doubt about his first plays, for they were anonymous and for the most part rearrangements. The young actor realised that, in these years near the Armada, patriotism was the link which most strongly united the very mixed audiences in the playhouses. He therefore turned to the chronicles, and produced the scenes from national history which then were so popular. He retouched scenes from the reign of Henry VI. which showed, in turn, the exploits of Talbot, the astonishing career of Joan of Arc, the "witch," and the English disasters caused by the civil war. Nothing hitherto performed had had so much movement or diversity or shown so much understanding of the stage as this dense trilogy of plays, entirely archaic in structure and attractive mainly because of the multiplicity of its incidents.

The triumph of Kyd and Marlowe had, however, shown the playwright that the applause of audiences could be won in other ways. The innovations attracted him by their success and by the conspicuous merits which veiled their conspicuous defects. He wrote, or more probably retouched, *Titus Andronicus*, a tragedy of atrocious vengeance which reveals an imagination even more fertile of horrors than those which conceived the *Spanish Tragedie* and the *Jew of Malta*. But he knew himself able to evoke laughter as well as tears and shudders. This young man had a very keen sense of the comic and an inexhaustible, almost excessive, flow of words. He was ambitious not only of a popular success, but also of the approval of the wits, even the court wits. Lyly's witty dialogue inspired him, and with vigour unknown to Lyly he wrote *Love's Labour's Lost*, a fantasy of which the subject and the style appealed to the most cultured section of the public. At much the same time, he supplied less fastidious appetites with a farce which was a free adaptation of

the *Menæchmi* of Plautus, and, that laughter might be the louder, he added to its plot, inventing two servants exactly like each other to balance the close resemblance between their masters. In this play he indulged in Rabelaisian mock-lyricism, the like of which had hardly yet been heard on the English stage.

Such are, approximately and probably, the plays which he produced before he provoked Greene's invective, those which made him so formidable a rival, in every branch of their profession he had been able to reach, to the playwrights then enjoying popular favour. His first romantic play, the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which definitely trespassed on Greene's own sphere, may also have been acted by this time, a fact which would explain the chagrin of that painter of the gentle love of women, to whom it must have been bitter to witness the advent of Silvia and Julia.

The playwright who had been neither to Oxford nor to Cambridge undoubtedly did these things as well as the most scholarly, even better than they. The impartial observer had to acknowledge that his lack of the regulation culture did not seem to impede him in any way. He did indeed use comparatively few mythological images, a fact which only pedants could regret, but his skill in composition was, when he chose, equal to that of any of the university dramatists, his style was as brilliant as theirs, and his blank verse no less sonorous, for all that this metre was of learned origin and the humanists had hoped to keep it to themselves.

Nothing is in fact falser than the idea that, because Shakespeare was an actor, he was disqualified as a playwright. It is none the less an idea to which mistaken critics cling, and even to-day there are those who would deny him the authorship of the plays recognised as his.[1] Mingled with Greene's invective, there is the starveling author's jealousy of the prosperous actor. We have said that, in spite of Puritan disapproval, actors in this

[1] The chief of the thories of this kind advanced are: (*a*) The Baconian Theory, that Bacon wrote Shakespeare's works, the oldest of these theories, for it dates back to 1856. See Delia Bacon, *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded* (1857), and many posterior publications. (*b*) The Rutland Theory. See C. Demblon, *Lord Rutland est Shakespeare* (1913). (*c*) The Derby Theory. See Abel Lefranc, *Sous le masque du Shakespeare, William Stanley VIe comte de Derby*, 2 vols. (1919), and numerous articles, all containing much interesting information. (*d*) The Oxford Theory. See C. Palmer, *Shakespeare Identified as Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford* (1920). For a summary of the many problems, see G. Connes, *Le Mystère Shakespearien* (Paris, 1926); Eng. trans.: *The Shakespeare Mystery* (London, 1927).

period enjoyed much prestige with the most various classes of society and had access to every world, from the lowest to the highest. Rather than be surprised that Shakespeare, like Molière, was an actor and yet wrote plays which were masterpieces, we might well ask if it would have been possible for him to write them in any other walk of life.

2. *His Career as a Dramatist from 1592 to 1601.*—One fact is certain: the Jack-of-all-trades whom Greene despised took rank, almost at once after Greene's attack, among the most brilliant and refined of poets, for he published *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* in quick succession. He was moreover honoured by the friendship of one of the greatest peers of the realm, the Earl of Southampton. Further, and most important of all, he was for six or seven years the undisputed, almost the only master of English drama. Chance and death and his own genius worked together to bring about this supremacy. Greene died in 1592, almost immediately after denouncing him. Marlowe, the greatest of his rivals, came to a sudden end next year. Kyd's death occurred in 1594. Lodge abandoned play-writing for medicine; Lyly withdrew from connection with the stage of the court; Peele plunged deeper and deeper into dissipation and wrote no more; Nashe had found his right means of expression in satirical pamphlets and novels. Until the end of the century, or at least until 1598, no one vied with Shakespeare except such mediocre purveyors of occasional plays as Anthony Munday. No important writer was his rival. It is impossible to cite a single play, either a tragedy or a comedy, which appeared in these years and had a real value to make it comparable to Shakespeare's.

It therefore is not surprising that the most unmodified praise accorded to Shakespeare in his lifetime dates from 1598, when Meres, a university man, classes him in the first rank of writers of tragedies and comedies. Meres, evidently well acquainted with his work, places him on a level with the ancients and cites such of his plays as had hitherto been produced, thus establishing which he wrote before his thirty-fifth year.

In this period and the three following years, that is up to 1601, Shakespeare wrote the rest of his historical dramas, his fairy-play, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, one tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, and all his romantic and light-hearted comedies. His

youth lasted through these years and his skill grew. From 1593 onwards he was no longer a prentice to his craft. Marlowe's influence is still apparent in *Richard III.*, that portrait of a monster of crime which might be called Shakespeare's *Tamburlaine*, but its dimensions have been westernised, and it claims admiration rather for the hero's strange energy than for his cruelty and his crimes. The tragedy of *Richard II.*, the arbitrary, weak, imaginative king who is the victim of his own vagaries, is a pendant to Marlowe's *Edward the Second*, but also a contrast to it. Shakespeare departs from his model and follows his own genius for character-drawing. In *King John* no reminiscence of Marlowe remains save the eloquence of the tirades and the sonorous roll of the verse. In the trilogy formed by the two parts of *Henry IV.* and by *Henry V.*, Shakespeare's most powerful creation in the sphere of English history, his broad strokes of the brush—his mingling of the comic and the tragic, his association of Falstaff with the Prince of Wales who became the hero of Agincourt—show that his genius had reached complete independence. Here, he owed nothing to anyone but himself.

His originality is no less striking in the passionate tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*, of which the splendour, the poetry and the pathos were not even faintly foreshadowed by any earlier work.

Every memory of Lyly's mythological imagination and witty dialogue and of Greene's sustained and tender grace grows dim and fades into oblivion before the exquisite fairy-piece, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and before the marvellous series of the romantic plays, compounded of feeling and laughter, mocking and grave at once, *The Merchant of Venice, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. The poet's contemporaries seem to have felt that these plays were more clearly marked by his genius than his other work, for they gave rise to the epithets frequently connected with his name, "sweet," "witty," "gentle." The public might be taken in by the playwrights who emulated his tragedies, but these were enchanted regions in which he reigned alone over an unshared kingdom.

He did not, however, imprison himself in them. He remained alertly watchful, ready to accept interesting novelties. When, about 1598, realism made its appearance on the comic stage, mingled by Ben Jonson with satire, or tinged by Dekker,

in the *Shoemakers Holiday*, with sentiment, the success of the new genre provoked Shakespeare to emulation. This, rather than mere chance, must have been the origin of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

It was at about this time that the critics' discussion of dramatic laws, hitherto confined to the narrow world of theorists, began also to interest authors and the literate section of the public. After the publication of Sidney's *Defence of Poesie*, in 1595, men were concerned about the unities, dramatic decorum and probability. Ben Jonson brought the question right on to the stage, the stage of the Globe Theatre where Shakespeare acted, and Shakespeare had too open a mind not to be interested in it. In the several prologues of *Henry V*. he shows himself cognisant of it. But he dismissed it with a smile, trusting to the docility of his audiences and to the facile imaginative power which kept them from quarrelling with their enjoyment. From this time, however, he was raising up for himself an opposition from the humanists which was to injure his prestige. Critics came to divide playwrights into two classes: those who wrote free drama and the classicists, the first headed by Shakespeare and the other by Jonson. That amusing university comedy, the *Returne from Parnassus*, played in 1601, marks the rise of this distinction which henceforth, in the opinion of some of Shakespeare's contemporaries, modified his glory.

3. *His Career from 1601 to 1608.*—About the year 1601 Shakespeare's dramatic career underwent a singular revolution. Hitherto there had been about his plays an air of youth and cheerfulness. Even *Romeo and Juliet* begins in a lively, even a rapturous, mood, and is rather a play which darkens to tragedy than a tragedy of unrelieved gloom. One of the most comic and one of the most fanciful of Shakespearean characters, Juliet's nurse and Mercutio, hold their own for a long time before the inroads of passion and the obsession of catastrophe. Not only, however, does 1601 mark the beginning of the series of great and cruel tragedies and no less tragic dramas of Roman history, but after this date such comedies as the poet wrote had lost all their gaiety. Characters intended to be diverting, like Parolles in *All's Well That Ends Well*, miss their effect. *Measure for Measure* hovers for three acts on the brink of tragedy, and escapes it finally only by an effort so violent as to cut one of the

poet's most powerful works in two. Where, as in *Troilus and Cressida,* laughter persists, it is bitter, cynical and sarcastic, never light-hearted.

The question of the reason for the change arises. Did it lie in Shakespeare's own feelings or outside him? There is no doubt that as an actor-author he was increasingly prosperous. The passing danger of the rivalry of the boy-actors cannot thus have disturbed him, any more than certain sarcasms uttered by the humanists. He suffered, however, some personal sorrows. He lost his father in 1601. Above all, the sonnets prove that he endured a tragedy of the heart, was betrayed by a friend and a mistress and bitterly disillusioned in his friendship and his love. In all probability, he was also disgusted with public affairs. As Southampton's friend, he was connected with Essex, and very deeply felt the failure of the Essex conspiracy, the execution of the favourite and the imprisonment of his accomplice, Southampton. The choice in this very year of the subject of *Julius Cæsar,* and the glorification, at Cæsar's expense, of Brutus, the conspirator, can best be explained by political events and by the poet's increasing pessimism.

Yet since this was a playwright compelled to provide the public with the feast they craved, we may also ask to what degree he met a general demand for gloomier, more tragic plays. It is beyond question that in these years there was a revival of that taste for the violent and horrible which reigned at the outset of Shakespeare's career and which, by his more human and happier work, he had done more than anyone else to supersede. This revived taste was once more satisfied, both by Shakespeare's plays and by those of his rivals.

About 1598 Chapman wrote his first sombre tragedy, *Bussy d'Ambois,* followed, in 1604, by the *Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois.* John Marston gained distinction by his frenzied dramas, *Antonio and Mellida* about 1598 and *Antonio's Revenge* in 1600, not to speak of his no less ferocious comedy *The Malcontent* in 1601. This last play inaugurated a stage type—the victim of odious injustice who, in anger mixed with irony, rants against the vice which surrounds him and prepares retribution. In 1601 Kyd's *Spanish Tragedie* was rejuvenated, with very fine additions which enlarge upon the theme of old Hieronimo's madness and are possibly from the pen of Ben Jonson. In 1602 Henry Chettle

produced the *Tragedy of Hoffman, or a Revenge for a Father,* of which the subject is again the now universally honoured one of revenge. Society, mankind and life were sarcastically or furiously, and almost universally, denounced.

It was in this atmosphere that *Hamlet* (1602) appeared, and was followed by Shakespeare's great pessimistic dramas—*Othello* (1604), *Lear* (1605-6), *Macbeth* (1607) and *Timon of Athens* (1607), together with his no less bitter comedies—*Measure for Measure* (1603) and *Troilus and Cressida* (date uncertain). A like spirit breathes in the Roman tragedies, ending in 1608 with *Coriolanus,* a hero whose life is all one long tumult of fury and indignation.

4. *Last Plays and Death (1608-16).*—About 1608, when he was forty-four years old, Shakespeare abandoned the tradition of violence, leaving it to be continued for some years longer in the plays of Cyril Tourneur, Webster and Middleton, and reverted to that romantic mood which he once had found congenial. He still wrote of crimes and misfortunes, but his bitter invectives had given way to indulgence and serenity. He had, it is true, lost the light-hearted gaiety of his youth; where once he had laughed, he now, in his maturity, smiled pensively, not without melancholy. The very fantastic nature of his subjects betrays his desire to find in romance a consolation for history. The period is that of *Pericles* (1608?), *Cymbeline* (1610), *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* (1611), plays which were the supreme accomplishment of this prosperous actor. He was at this time about to retire to his native town, where he passed the last years of his life in peace, and died in 1616 at the age of fifty-two.

The question again arises of the reason for the changed atmosphere of the plays, whether it be the mere effect of years and the spiritual travail through which, after a phase of pessimism, the poet at last attained to peace, or whether it respond to the need of the public for relaxation. Audiences had indeed been sated with horrors and frenzied declamation. Had Shakespeare been apprised of this by the success of two young playwrights who had quickly reached popularity, Beaumont and Fletcher? The first result of their brilliant collaboration was *Philaster,* a play which is the quintessence of the sentimental and romantic, and which was performed at the Globe in 1608.

They were Shakespeare's disciples and he had nothing to learn from them. Yet, noticing how they succeeded, he may have realised that the time for gloomy tragedy was past.

While his mood softened, he conceded nothing to the cult of classic regularity which Sidney and Ben Jonson had in turn recommended. Never did he make as free with all the unities as in *Cymbeline*, except in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*, where he traverses lands and seas and accompanies his heroines from the cradle to marriage. Yet, as though to show to the end that he took sides against no dramatic theory, *The Tempest* is the one of his plays which is most respectful of the unities in their broad sense. Its action passes in one day and in only one place, within the bounds of an island. Thus to the last Shakespeare demonstrated his only conviction: that all dramatic systems are good, but not one of them indispensable.

It has been ascertained that almost all those of his plays which are accepted as his supreme masterpieces were produced after 1601. Yet, owing to the strictures of the humanists, he seems in this second part of his career to have lost the unique position which was his at the end of the sixteenth century. In the judgment of contemporaries his glory was then not distinguishable from that of others, all in various ways remarkable, who stood beside him. Webster, although he owes him much, names him together with Dekker and Heywood, as ranking a little below Chapman and Jonson, those learned authors, and Fletcher and Beaumont, those well-born young playwrights. He places him on a level with two popular improvisers. The quality he praises in him is his "right happy and copious industry." We seem to hear the faint echo of animated, noisy arguments in the literary taverns or even on the stage, arguments which did not diminish Shakespeare's success with the public, but which modified his reputation among certain wits and pedants, those who were beginning to pose as dramatic critics.

After his retirement and death, Shakespeare still had fervent admirers among amateurs of the stage, and also among the actors who had been his comrades and who remembered, when they piously published the 1623 folios, the applause which had greeted his plays. But since there was no organised criticism, his works, whence all his successors helped themselves abundantly, were classed with those of his contemporaries, almost on an equality

with them. That his incomparable superiority was realised at all appears only in some enthusiastic verses written by Ben Jonson, his rival, and the young Milton, in the cult which the poets Suckling and d'Avenant traditionally rendered to him, and in the love which the good Duchess of Newcastle conceived for him in her youth. Only when men could view him at a great distance, across nearly a century, did they discern his true stature.

5. *In What does Shakespeare's Superiority over his Contemporaries Consist? The Variety of his Gifts.*—Wherein does Shakespeare's superiority, universally recognised to-day, lie? To us it shines with a blinding light, yet it did not dazzle those round about him, whence it follows that in some way it was difficult to apprehend. There is indeed hardly a glory of Shakespeare's drama which might not be matched by a fragment or an aspect of some other play of the period. He did not—how could he?—surpass the pathos and poetic sublimity of the last scenes of Marlowe's *Faust.* He created no atmosphere of grief and horror more agonising than that which envelops Webster's *Duchess of Malfi.* Not one of his plays is more solidly constructed than Jonson's *Volpone, Epicœne* and *Alchemist.* None of his comedies is more skilfully staged than Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle,* none of his tragedies than their *Maid's Tragedy.* Fletcher's and Dekker's songs yield nothing to his in lyrical beauty. He has created no character more singularly original than Dekker's old Friscobaldo, and he never gives the illusion of reality more powerfully than Middleton and Rowley in their De Flores. The poignant humanity of Heywood in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* equals his when his painting is most moving. There is in Dekker's *Shoemakers Holiday* a merry swing not bettered in Shakespeare's most exhilarating comedy. Every element in Shakespeare's drama might thus, in isolation, be matched by the best of the contemporary writers for the stage at their best. What, then, is distinctive in Shakespeare?

First, his combination of all the gifts which were scattered or isolated in the work of others, the multifariousness of his curiosity and the extreme diversity of his talents. From the very outset of his career this is apparent. He did not, like most of his fellow-dramatists, continue unswervingly in the path in which he made his first steps, acquiring, like Lyly, Kyd and

Marlowe, a distinct manner which both marked and bounded his personality. His flexibility was marvellous. He adapted himself to the most diverse material, and seemed to use it all with equal ardour and joy. Besides the narrative poems like *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece,* into which he poured all his love for lyrical beauty and command of rhymes, his first essays in drama are so astonishingly various that no one theory fits them and each of them ought to be studied separately. They correspond to and overflow every dramatic classification hitherto known—national history, tragedy, comedy, romantic and fairy-plays. But these categories do not suffice to show their variety. The word comedy includes works of Shakespeare's as distinct as *Love's Labour's Lost,* that fantasy made of sparkling dialogue, fireworks and word-play, and the *Comedy of Errors,* a farce with a much involved plot modelled on Plautus. No two of the dramas of English history have the same shape or a like movement. *Henry VI.*, little removed from the mysteries, is a chronological series of scenes from a very long reign, hardly connected with each other and without a central figure. *Henry IV.* and *Henry V.* also resume whole reigns, but they include very searching character-drawing and are persistently dominated by one personage. This trilogy is in fact massed very freely about the wild young heir to the crown, constantly in the company of the jovial drunkard Falstaff, till he is transformed into a triumphant king. The interest of *Richard III.* is concentrated in the monstrous Gloucester, who through fraud and murder hews himself a way to the throne, and continues his criminal course until death strikes him down. *King John* is less dominated by a royal figure, that of the vacillating and cowardly tyrant who is the slave rather than the master of circumstances: its action turns upon a single crime, the murder of the young Arthur. As for *Richard II.*, it is essentially a tragedy, the dramatisation not of a reign but of a crisis: everything in it is reduced to a struggle between the bad, weak and capricious king, a sentimentalist and an egoist, and the politic Bolingbroke.

Shakespeare is never found twice at the same point. It is as though he had sworn in his youth to experiment in constructions of the most varied kinds and in the most highly contrasted moods. He shows equal aptitude for the tragic and the comic, the sentimental and the burlesque, lyrical fantasy and character-study,

portraits of women and of men. To the end of his career these alternatives recur. In the two years, 1601 and 1602, he produced the light-hearted comedy, *Twelfth Night*, with its mingling of farce and romance, *Julius Cæsar*, *Hamlet* and *All's Well That Ends Well*. About 1608 came, in quick succession, *Coriolanus*, *Timon* and *Pericles*. His greatest triumphs could not induce him to sustain an attitude, and although a persistent pessimism consecutively inspired, from 1604 to 1606, the great sorrowful tragedies, *Othello*, *Lear* and *Macbeth*, these were differentiated by such astonishing variety of kind, presentment and dramatic movement, that the impossibility of finding one formula to fit them all is quickly apparent.

This diversity exists everywhere in Shakespearean drama. It is shown both in the contrast afforded by plays produced at the same time, and in that evolution which colours the whole series of the plays with the hues of the succeeding seasons—the fresh green of spring, the darkness of summer thunder-storms, and the melancholy splendour of autumn.

6. *Creative Force. His Characters.*—Besides his variety, the poet's capital gift was certainly that he could endow historical and imaginary beings with life, not intermittently and by flashes, like most of his contemporaries, but constantly, so that however they are modified during a play they do not lose their identity. This power was abnormally developed in him, but he wielded it easily, naturally, spontaneously, without ever giving an impression of effort. From the beginning there is life everywhere, but as he advanced towards maturity his characters came to be more boldly outlined and more complex. This is first manifest in Biron in *Love's Labour's Lost*, in the antithesis presented by Proteus and Valentine in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and by Richard II. and Richard III. in the plays called after them, and in the contrast in *Richard II.* between the too imaginative king and the astute Bolingbroke. The first important comic figure is undoubtedly Bottom in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, but the clown Launce in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and the Dromios in the *Comedy of Errors* had previously made good their claim to droll originality. From 1593 onwards, very few characters of any importance in any one of the plays did not receive from his creator the vital spark and the distinctive mark of his individuality; each one of them deserves to be named. They differ

in their sex, age, state of life, virtues and vices, but all of them are alike in being alive. Since we cannot go through all their list, let us think only of those who in a single tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, receive their rich share of this vital gift: the lovers no doubt have most of it, but it is also meted out to old Capulet, Tybalt the bully, the cynical Mercutio, the nurse and Friar Laurence. Their parts may be short, they may have to speak only some twenty lines of verse, but these are enough to let the poet make them unforgettable. Multiply them by thirty-six, the number of his plays, and you have a throng than which none more alive ever issued from a human imagination. A whole world persuades audiences, or even mere readers, of its presence, with a force of realism to which very few of the real beings among whom playgoers spend their lives attain. It is principally in this respect that Shakespeare surpasses his rivals and is Shakespeare. His contemporaries have written scattered scenes, as animated, as tragic, comic or poetic as his, but when the total number of the persons to whom they have ensured immortality is counted, it is questionable whether all of these, collected from all their plays, would counterbalance those in a single great Shakespearean play.

It is indeed not enough to say that Shakespeare's supreme gift to his puppets, that which places him far above his contemporaries, is life and animation. Animation at least is not lacking to the creations of the others, some of whom are prodigal of it. But only very rarely can they give the illusion that their characters are at once living and true. Not Marlowe, nor Jonson, nor Beaumont and Fletcher, to mention only the most illustrious of Shakespeare's rivals, was capable of the truthful character-drawing which could alone prolong the life of his puppets beyond the time of a performance. The characters of these other playwrights are almost always excessive, inhuman, arbitrary or theatrical; their aim is to produce surprise; in their feelings we do not recognise our own; their extravagance or their inexplicably sudden changes of front are disconcerting. Shakespeare's characters, whether good or bad, whether moving among the realities of history or among the most romantic happenings, have an unfailing humanity which makes them plausible and keeps them within the orbit of our sympathy.

7. *The Epical Basis of Shakespeare's Drama.*—A profound

difference between Shakespeare's work and that of his contemporaries consists in the greater truth, the more serious and substantial character, which fundamentally belongs to his plays in the mass. Their matter, and theirs alone, is epical as much as romantic. He alone gave so much space to the epical, and wrought it consciously, continuously and on a great scale. His six dramas of English history and three Roman tragedies, together with *Hamlet, Lear* and *Macbeth*—based on earlier and more or less legendary chronicles accepted as genuine history by him and his public—form such a whole as is found nowhere else and is the solid bulwark of Shakespearean drama. They prove the poet to have been long in contact with what was, or what he believed to be, the realities of the past. His effort to evoke and revive the past left him with a taste for truth apparent in his treatment of subjects which are hardly historical but are borrowed from the *novellieri,* for instance the themes of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello.* It would be possible to find yet other reminiscences of the epic mood which give substance to fiction even in his fantastic or fairy worlds, right in the heart of his romantic plays. Other playwrights often made history unreal, but Shakespeare could warrant the truth even of romance.

It is the plays devoted to national history which most plainly connect his work with the old religious drama, of which the original object was not mere pleasure but instruction and edification.

Nothing is more honourable to Elizabethan audiences than that they sought their amusement in the mere spectacle of great national events; nothing better attests the poet's greatness than his self-effacement in his work and his neglect of all the pettiness of the dramatic codes and the recipes for producing emotion. There is no apparent art. The simplicity and the greatness of conception found in the mysteries are repeated. As a child, Shakespeare may have seen the old sacred plays performed at Coventry. There is thus a link between this poet of the Renascence and the poets of the Middle Ages. Country instead of faith is his theme. He imparts knowledge of history as those old poets taught religion. Except for *King John,* the subject of which sets it some two hundred years apart from the others, these plays are a continuous history of England over a long period, the whole fifteenth century. From the day when Boling-

broke dethroned the weak Richard II. and founded the Lancastrian dynasty, until the Battle of Bosworth, when Henry VII. defeated the tyrant Richard III., ended the bloodthirsty Wars of the Roses and won the crown of the House of Tudor, Shakespeare brought the history of their country before the eyes of his countrymen, at a time when the Tudors were still reigning, Elizabeth wielding her glorious and undisputed sway. Foreign war with its triumphs and disasters, years of prosperity and of misery, glory and shame, princes heroic and abject: all succeeded each other in the plays, painted almost impartially for a public enabled at once to marvel and to learn.

Shakespeare keeps this breadth when he leaves London for Rome and abandons Holinshed for Plutarch. Although no longer sustained by patriotism, he is upheld by the prestige which belongs to the great names of antiquity, and haloes about the heads of Coriolanus, Brutus, Julius Cæsar, Antony, Cleopatra. His first care still is to breathe new life into famous men and great events. He is less scrupulously respectful of truth than incapable of conceiving drama as made by the violation of truth. He is, however, entirely unconcerned to reproduce manners and costumes. Knowing nothing of the historical realism which goes by the name of local colour, he succeeds in representing the past with human truth so deep and life so intense that his work has become complementary to that of the scholar. The scholar may be left to note where the men of the past differed from the men of the present. Shakespeare marks the characteristics they share so vigorously that he eliminates twenty centuries. With him historical drama reaches its apotheosis in such scenes as that in which the Roman populace, after acclaiming Brutus, Cæsar's murderer, is almost immediately turned against him by the moving, insidious eloquence of Antony, so that men weep at the sight of Cæsar's body and cry out for the death of the conspirators.

Only Jonson followed Shakespeare along this path, but he, having more exact knowledge, was too much preoccupied with the painting of curious customs and with his own learned details to retain Shakespeare's broad epic manner. He was too ready to sacrifice the intuitive insight into human character and the play of human feelings to a literal reproduction of the narratives of Latin historians.

8. *Shakespeare's Art.*—The question whether Shakespeare be an artist is the one concerning him which was most discussed

by his contemporaries and has most divided posterity. From the beginning, his natural genius, fancy and spontaneity have been almost universally recognised. But that firm reason, a concerted plan and an organising will directed his poetic force, this was for long not perceived and is still disputed by many. "Shakespeare wanted art," Ben Jonson says bluntly, and comments on the statement in a well-known passage. "He had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped. 'Sufflaminandus erat,' [1] as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his own power: would the rule of it had been so, too!"

Shakespeare is so abundant a writer, at times indeed to the point of excess, that Jonson inclined to deduce that he lacked self-control, that his genius ran away with him. His fellow-actors, publishing his manuscripts in 1623, gave credence to this opinion when, thinking to honour him, they stated that "what he thought, he uttered with that easinesse that wee have scarse received from him a blot in his papers." Milton echoed them even in his loving praise of Shakespeare, calling him "sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child," who warbled forth his "native wood-notes wild."

Literary judgments often rest on an antithesis. We can understand how in men's minds the learned and laborious Jonson soon came to be contrasted with the spontaneous Shakespeare. Art, by a confusion between learning and care for art, was conceded to the one, genius to the other. There was no protest against this view except that which, curiously, was advanced by Jonson himself, who had done so much to propagate it. He, in the fine verses which headed the 1623 folio, wrote:

Yet must I not give Nature all: thy art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
For though the poet's matter nature be,
His art doth give the fashion. And that he
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses' anvil; turn the same,
And himself with it, that he thinks to frame;
Or for the laurel, he may gain a scorn!
For a good poet's made, as well as born.
And such wert thou.

[1] "He had to be repressed."

This irrefutable evidence of the great humanist who had known him personally is confirmed not only by Shakespeare's non-dramatic work, with all its marks of loving chiselling, but also by numerous signs of corrections, some of them considerable, in the several editions of the plays. The absence of erasures from the final manuscript is of comparatively little value as evidence. Moreover, while Shakespeare's work contains no dramatic theory, it very clearly indicates his opinions on the art of acting. The celebrated scene in which Hamlet criticises the actors and tries to inspire them to natural interpretation, equally removed from emphasis and flatness, says much for the control which Shakespeare would have had reason exercise over caprice and fancy. It is in this passage that an illuminating dictum occurs which hardly leaves a doubt that the poet could be completely master of himself even when borne on the wings of the most impetuous flights of his genius: "in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness." What classical critic would not subscribe to this precept, even envy it?

To admit that Shakespeare gives this regulating power to wisdom is the best way of explaining the harmony which he has been able to bring into almost every one of his plays. Different though their elements be, each has its own atmosphere, and this could not regularly happen as the effect of a fortunate accident. The very freedom habitual to popular plays, the custom of mixing two or even three plots in one play, the alternation of the tragic and the comic, the concurrent use of rhymed and blank verse and prose: all contributed to enhance the difficulty of fusing harmoniously pictures and scenes so disparate in their moods. The resultant success is the more meritorious because, like something done for a wager, it was all but unattainable. No one recipe was ever twice applicable, but each work demanded its special solution. A detailed study would be necessary to show the concealed and sure art which interweaves the threads of the double plot of *The Merchant of Venice,* finally confronting Shylock with Portia, or which in *Midsummer Night's Dream* brings together, from the opposite extremes of society, the grotesque craftsmen and the lords and ladies of Athens and, from their even greater remoteness, Titania, the little fairy, and Bottom,

the boor, whose meeting has a symbolism essential to the play. Similarly, in *King Lear* the theme of filial ingratitude is repeated, as by an echo, when Lear's suffering recurs in Gloster, the betrayal of Goneril and Regan in Edmund.

We might thus examine nearly all the plays, for a different method is used in each of them. Is Shakespeare's art less real because it is essentially mobile and varied? His tendency is to efface all its traces, and only patient study can reveal them in their secret, much-veiled lurking-places, hidden behind the illusion which art itself creates.

Take in *Hamlet* the fragment of a tragedy after Seneca which the prince causes the actors to declaim in his presence. The prince's pleasure in this passage and the impassioned pathos of the actor's delivery are proof that there is here no question of a mere parody. Even while, by the inappropriate praise he puts into the mouth of Polonius, Shakespeare makes fun of some archaic and forced language in the tirade, he clearly considers it to be in itself eloquent and effective. It is a fine piece of declamation. Here it is true that he is doing justice to a genre not his own, but he is also using this sample of noble and artificial tragedy to make, by force of contrast, his own play seem entirely natural. His characters speak while the others declaim. Or rather, his characters are not such, but merely men. Thus the contrast turns his own play from a stage representation into very reality.

9. *Shakespeare's Empiricism.*—The factor which has done most to mask Shakespeare's art is its consistency with cheerful or at least resigned acceptance of the conditions which the contemporary stage imposed on a dramatist, and which were a result of the demands and habits of the public, the poor staging and methods of Shakespeare's brother actors. His art is essentially empirical: it takes realities into account and is not based on the abstract. He himself, speaking with the voice of King Henry V., reveals its principle:

> There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
> Would men observingly distil it out.

In no way blind to the faults of the stage of his day, Shakespeare was as aware as anyone else of the poverty of its scenery and the brutal taste of the "groundlings," "capable of nothing

xplicable dumb-shows and noise"; he was annoyed by the of clowns, who interrupted and held up the most pathetic with ill-timed fooling; he was pained by the emphatic nations of tragic actors whom he implores not to "saw the oo much with your hand" or "tear a passion to tatters, to rags." Yet he did not, as a consequence, effect any riddance; forbade nothing. He attempted no such return to the le simplicity of the theatre of antiquity as would soon have ptied the Globe playhouse, but endeavoured to do the best he uld with the actual conditions he could not escape, galling ough some of them were. Although he lacked scenery, he id not think it necessary that the whole action of his plays hould pass in a neutralised scene, some abstract place. He counted on the facile imagination of his audience to conjure up what he could not reproduce, and helped them with the swift, vivid descriptions which he introduced into his verses. The scenery which the naked stage could not provide is supplied in the text of his plays. His characters and places are so closely associated that they cannot be separated. The name of Juliet at once calls up the Capulets' ball-room, or the moonlit balcony, or the tomb in which she lay before she died. The trees of the Forest of Arden droop and rustle about Rosalind. The storm blows upon the dishevelled Lear on the deserted heath. Hamlet waits feverishly for the ghost on the platform at Elsinore or cracks grim jokes in the churchyard. Nowhere is there more of the picturesque or of the poetry of nature than in these plays, performed with a few properties to symbolise rather than to indicate the places in which their action passed.

Similarly, instead of eliminating or disdainfully neglecting th clown, Shakespeare undertook his education, gave him directi and converted a necessary evil into good. Marlowe, an ideali proclaimed his contempt for clowning and resolution to have d with it. In *Tamburlaine* he has turned the clown out, un indeed, as may well have happened, the groundlings called back to fool between the scenes and thus provide relaxation the sustained sublimity of this enormous play. Marlowe v concede nothing to him. Yet when Marlowe came to *Faustus* he had, willy-nilly, to compromise, and since he beneath him carefully to write a part for the clown, he him, as it were, a sketch for his buffoonery and grimaci

let him fill it in for himself. The result is a play of which parts, the beginning and the end, are admirable, but which is a mere framework.

Shakespeare, complain as he may of the outrageousness of the clown, takes another course. After all, he appreciated the inherent drollery of this figure, his jokes, his special terms of speech, his quips, and his play on words. He therefore adopts him, lets him into comedies and even into tragedies so long as he speaks "no more than is set down" for him. He writes his part to fit his habitual speech, puns and all, but includes in it some better compounded and more pointed jokes. Shakespeare makes of the clown, whether he remains a boor or becomes a court fool or nobleman's jester, a sort of popular philosopher who is independent and sagacious beneath his apparent stupidity, and who passes through most of the plays without belonging to them.

Sometimes, however, he makes a real character of the clown, humanises him and gives him a sort of heart. He lends him affection, such as Launce feels for his mangy dog, or Touchstone for Celia, or Lear's fool for his master. Or he admits him into a craft. Bottom is a weaver and, with his self-sufficiency and artlessness, has character, shown for instance in his conviction that the amusement which his stupidity affords proceeds from his wit. Bottom has won a place in the foreground of a play, for the meaning of *Midsummer Night's Dream* depends on his meeting with Titania. Elsewhere the clown has the guise of a watchman, when he appears as Dogberry, a pompous idiot and the prototype of all the burlesque policemen of the stage. At the very end of his career Shakespeare brings the clown back to the state which was his originally before he became a professional jester. He identifies him with the country gaby whose name had clung to him, but whom he had forgotten. In *The Winter's Tale* he is an old shepherd's son, a real thick-headed, ingenuous country lad. Thus the clown who had deserted the fields of the stage is brought back to the fold.

To sum up: Shakespeare's use of the clown is often so happy and unexpected that this character could hardly be spared from Shakespearean drama. If the clown were gone, something would be missing from the whole. The purity and nobility of the plays would doubtless be enhanced, but their meaning would be

restricted and their philosophy would suffer. The poet did well to think, like Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*—

> For nought so vile that on the earth doth live
> But to the earth some special good doth give.

It was this tolerance, proper to him, which enabled Shakespeare to retain the clown longer than most of his rivals, and the fact is among those which make his plays seem more archaic than theirs. Jonson and Fletcher, more innovators than he, soon got rid of the vestiges of the primitive stage which clashed with their conceptions of realism and modernity. They did not perceive the "soul of goodness" which lurked in the clown who had become an anachronism.

Shakespeare's conservatism is more clearly shown in matters of greater consequence. He seems to have been one of the least inventive of his contemporary writers. He preferred subjects of which others had made trial. Very often he did no more than work upon existing plays. Some of his masterpieces had already been tried on the stage, for instance *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *Lear*. Not to speak of the doubtful *Henry VI.*, it is certain that there were plays prior to his on the same subjects as the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Richard III.*, *King John*, *The Merchant of Venice*, the *Henry IV.* and *Henry V.* trilogy, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Measure for Measure*. The same is probably true of the *Comedy of Errors*, *Richard II.*, *Julius Cæsar* and *Troilus and Cressida*.

When Shakespeare's subjects had not already been dramatised, he generally took them, even for his comedies and romantic plays, from a book, and reproduced them, on the whole, faithfully. He borrowed the theme of *As You Like It* from a novel by Lodge, that of *The Winter's Tale* from a novel by Greene, and *All's Well That Ends Well* from one of Boccaccio's stories. *Othello* comes from a story of Cinthio, *Pericles* from old Gower's version of the Greek novel *Apollonius of Tyre*. The originals are known of the serious parts of *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night* and *Cymbeline*.

The plays of which he seems to have invented the subjects are very few, nor can it be absolutely asserted that their source will not one day be discovered. They are the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, save for some insignificant passages, *Love's Labour's*

Lost, Midsummer Night's Dream and *The Tempest*, and they are just enough to show that, if he did not usually care to create his plays entirely, he could do it when he chose. It is remarkable that the three last of these plays have an exceptional character, that, having been voluntarily and arbitrarily created, they are of the nature of plays with a purpose, symbolical plays. Each of them illustrates an idea.

Some young men have sworn to devote themselves entirely to study and have forsworn love. Love comes to rouse them from their studious retreat; they find that they have taken a wrong course, that love is the supreme master of knowledge and wisdom. They repudiate their semi-monastic vows and give themselves up to the joys of love. Such is the theme of *Love's Labour's Lost* and the manifest moral of this fantastic comedy.

What laws does love obey? How is the thread which binds hearts spun and how is it sometimes broken? Who can explain sudden changes of feeling, the interplay of sympathy and antipathy? Helena loves Demetrius, and Demetrius Hermia, whose heart is all Lysander's. Suddenly Lysander as well as Demetrius gives his love to the despised Helena. Soon afterwards, happily, the hearts which had gone astray beat true again. What has occurred? The play tells that fairies with souls as light as their bodies tangle and untangle the skein of human caprice. Oberon would help the lovers to an understanding, but the elf Puck, his giddy, mischievous servant, carries out his orders wrong. The fairies themselves can be blind as men. Oberon and Titania love, quarrel, are jealous of each other, are reconciled. Because the juice of a flower is dropped on her eyes, little lovely Titania is enamoured of a bragging blockhead of an artificer who wears an ass's head, and she remains under the spell until she is released by the counter-charm For such is the poet's answer to those who asked him the reason of the heart's vagaries. Spells are worked by mysterious beings who themselves are the sport of enchantment. He explains, then vanishes with a mischievous smile. Such is the theme of the *Midsummer Night's Dream.*

The Tempest, written at the other end of Shakespeare's career, is also full of symbolism. Prospero is a magician who by his art has subjected the man-beast personified in Caliban and the invisible elements personified in Ariel. A king whom treason has disinherited, he has resolved to bring his triumphant enemies

low and deprive them of power. He draws them to his lonely island, where he has them at his mercy, but his object is to pardon them and change their hate to love, to marry his daughter Miranda to Ferdinand, the son of his enemy.

These are plays of which the conception is individual and arbitrary and proportionately significant. But among the rest of Shakespeare's drama these are exceptional, for usually he seeks not to interpret or guide life, but to present it. There is no symbolism in most of his plays except such as it may please the ingenious hearer to introduce. *Hamlet*, universally acknowledged to be the one of his tragedies most laden with thought, touches on many problems—vengeance, suicide, love—but advances a solution for none of them. The tragedy provides the spectacle of the trouble of Hamlet's soul and attempts no more.

Content, as a rule, "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature," and to show "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure," Shakespeare gives fewer direct lessons than the dramatists who, like Ben Jonson, pose as censors of morals. Systematic thinking has marked his work less clearly than that of the revolutionary Marlowe. He has not Massinger's tendency to oratorical discussion of a thesis.

10. *Shakespeare's Philosophy.*—Much has, nevertheless, been said of Shakespeare's philosophy. So many reflections on life occur in his plays as to produce the illusion that he was endowed with superior wisdom. It is tempting to imagine that the collection of the scattered fragments of his thought would constitute a body of doctrine which would yield an answer, his answer, to the riddles of life.

In truth, no Shakespearean system exists; this philosophy vanishes if we seek to grasp it. Its numerous contradictions soon become apparent, and its incoherence, which is no less than that of reality. They escape disappointment who hold that had the poet had a message to deliver he would have placed it in his non-dramatic work, more especially his sonnets, and that he did nothing of the sort. There is nothing in Shakespeare's philosophy which is distinctive or carries conviction. The miracle is not in the abstract thought his works contain, but in that extraordinary pliability which let him put the most divergent, most striking and most ingenious arguments in the mouths of his characters in support of their passions or interests. Each of them, from the kings

to the clowns, has indeed a philosophy, which he makes singularly clear. Each judges life in his own way, from his own angle, whence he may utter a remark strikingly true, and profound also, in many instances. But all this is the emanation of a vigorous dramatic genius. These scattered reflections, evoked by circumstances and deliberately self-contradictory, derive strength from their appropriateness, and are penetrating by the feeling of which they are born, as they are beautiful by the poetry of the words which clothe them. But it is vain to hope, by gathering them together, to attain to a higher wisdom which was the poet's. They are not maxims accumulating to produce a total result. Their number is commensurate only with the diversity of human judgments, and reveals only the playwright's marvellous versatility and his consciousness of the relative nature of all things. Hence philosophies constructed from the ideas scattered through the plays have been frail and mutually contradictory. Protestants, Catholics and free-thinkers have with equally plausible arguments claimed Shakespeare for their own. He enunciates principles akin to those proverbs and popular sayings, all equally striking, all true within their limits, which contradict each other; one of them can often be matched by its exact contrary—"Like father, like son"—"A père avare fils prodigue." Hamlet, discouraged by the something "rotten in the state of Denmark," has cause to hesitate, exactly as Henry V., seeing "some soul of goodness in things evil," has reasons for acting, finds that the very obstacles in his path are motives for action and hope. Each temperament and every circumstance has in the plays its appropriate philosophy. No higher doctrine embraces and resumes them all.

Nevertheless, the deduction is allowable that the playwright's thought rarely went beyond earthly life, that if he sometimes glanced further he soon brought back his gaze to this world, which seemed to him man's all. He does indeed admit with Hamlet that human reason is limited and surrounded by a great mystery:

> There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Yet Hamlet himself says, "To die: to sleep; no more," for all that he keeps

> the dread of something after death,
> The undiscovered country from whose bourn
> No traveller returns.

Other characters in the plays make more decided denials. It ay mean nothing that Macbeth, the murderer, thinks

> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more: it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.

It may mean no more that Jaques, the melancholy philosopher, believes

> All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players.

Touchstone, the fool, may be left responsible for his limited view of life:

> "It is ten o'clock:
> Thus may we see," quoth he, "how the world wags:
> 'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,
> And after one hour more 'twill be eleven;
> And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
> And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot;
> And thereby hangs a tale."

It is, however, difficult to think that Prospero did not vo the poet's mature opinion when, reflectively, he averred that

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

This is to speak as a philosopher of antiquity rather t Christian. Yet the saying was not such as to scandal audience of the Renascence or to mark Shakespeare's p more impious than those of his contemporaries. Marlo written more audacious lines. Shakespeare did no more t rare and unforgettable forms in which to enclose th thinking of the men of his time.

11. *Poetry of Form. Style. The Power and the of Shakespeare.*—Shakespeare's personality, which h ately effaced behind his work and made subservient to tions of the stage, asserted itself irrepressibly in the

plays, his style and his versification. There all the wealth of his gifts found vent. Marked though the characteristics of the period be, the form of his work is unique and incomparable, impaired by faults as brilliant as the colours in a golden pheasant's plumage. He was afflicted by all the diseases of style proper to his century, one after another, as well as by its happy bravery, and he blended them in a style entirely his own, which transforms its constituent elements and harmonises disparities as numerous as though they had been assembled in each play in fulfilment of a wager.

His dramatic gift alone would have secured his immediate popularity, but would hardly have ensured his glory. The first dramatist was also the first poet of his day and one of the first of all time. The poet is not only revealed by the hundred exquisite songs with which the plays are strewn. The ardent passion for beauty which is the distinction of the sonnets, and causes the best of them to reach the high-water mark of beauty in English poetry, attains in the plays to results as fine, and there has a diversity of mood and accent impossible to the sonnets with their monotonous theme and form.

Most often the fusion of dramatic and lyric elements is perfect, absolute and beyond analysis. A whole scene is lifted to a higher mood while the proportions of its constituent elements are unmodified, and thus the pleasure of truth, which is retained, and the added pleasure of beauty are blended in strict unity.

Beauty comes of the perfection of the style and the versification, the rarity of the images and the accompanying music. No purely lyrical poetry in English weds words or metaphors more triumphantly or contains more varied, richer or more delicate sonorities than those which Shakespeare spontaneously and inexhaustibly produces in the blank verse of his plays. Yet the pleasure of an emotion properly dramatic is nearly always added to the pleasure of lyricism, which therefore is saved from the egoistical dilettantism fatal to enchantment. A special glory belongs to the poet who, without sacrifice of probability, inspires other hearts than his own with the highest lyrical emotions and causes other lips to utter them, while at the same time he follows or urges the progress of the action which decides the fate of his puppets.

In the capital scenes of the great tragedies—the duologues

of Roméo and Juliet, Hamlet's soliloquies, the scene of the awakening of Othello's jealousy, of Lear's passionate railings or of Macbeth's hallucinations—this poetic prestige overlies a pathos which could exist without this splendour but is transfigured by it. All the translations have allowed this supreme enchantment to escape, and give, therefore, only an incomplete comprehension of the total effect. When Iago sees Othello, already ravaged by the jealousy he has put in him, coming towards him, and says:

> Not poppy, nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world
> Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
> Which thou ow'dst yesterday,

something infused in the beauty of the rhythm and the syllables transforms Iago into an infernal magician. He has been a vile rascal; he becomes a demon.

The defects of this rich genius for words are almost as glaring as its qualities are dazzling. There is on every occasion such a multitudinous flow of words and images to Shakespeare's mind as nothing seems able to dam. Ben Jonson, noticing this irrepressible impetuosity, regretted that it could not be checked: "Sufflaminandus erat." Images gush forth, beautiful or strange, but without order, redundant and sometimes injurious to dramatic probability. Old John of Gaunt at his last gasp breathes out his love for England in multiplied, piled-up similes, interrupted, resumed, inexhaustible. His tirade would weary the lungs of a young, strong man. The wounded soldier who relates to Duncan Macbeth's victory over the rebels heaps frenzied metaphors on to emphatic similes.

Even more often the poet yields to the temptation to be subtle. He plunges into subtlety confidently, sure that he can find a way out of the labyrinth. In the sonnets, when he is speaking in his own person, he uses and misuses subtlety immoderately. His narrative poems are full of it and it is the very web of the unending lamentations of Lucrece, Tarquin's victim. Almost all his characters, whether tragic or comic, show unexpectedly a taste for the like quintessence of wit, a joy in splitting the finest hairs. The young queen, wife to Richard II. (Act II. scene ii.), when she is uneasy about her husband's absence, involves herself, with

a courtier who seeks to dispel her anxiety, in the maziest of arguments about her presentiment of evil. The most subtle sonneteer would find it difficult to follow the slender threads of these highly abstract analyses, in which the play of verbal antithesis is so fine-drawn that even a slow reading hardly discovers its clues. However keen our perceptions may be, we have little chance of unravelling the almost invisible threads of such a skein while we are listening to a play. Shakespeare has become a wit rather than a poet and, like a tight-rope walker, is carried away by pleasure in his own agility. Not all his experience of the theatre can defeat his joy in overcoming difficulties.

This lack of moderation is the limitation of his dramatic genius and his realism. It brings on to the stage a superfluity of lyricism both ill-timed and out of place. It endows the most divergent characters, even the dull and the foolish, with an improbable command of language and power of analysis.

In part the defect is to be ascribed to the age, but it is mainly due to Shakespeare himself. In fact, it is probably true that, except the fuliginous Chapman, lost in metaphors and drowned in subtleties, Shakespeare has a more difficult style than any other Elizabethan dramatist. Marlowe's eloquence, Jonson's vigorous realism, Dekker's easy grace, Middleton's dry precision, Fletcher's rather superficial distinction and Massinger's oratorical swing make their plays more lucid than his, leave fewer difficulties to be solved and knots to be untied. Although in many passages, and nearly always in the most beautiful, Shakespeare shows himself capable of complete clarity and frank simplicity, he yet had a personal taste for a twisted, slightly enigmatic mode of expression, for variants on the current uses of speech, and the hearer and even the reader must consequently exert ingenuity to understand him. This habit of mind, usually dropped when a play reaches its intensest moment, is especially manifest in secondary scenes in which the dramatic instinct does not restrain him. It expresses a natural tendency which needed to be contained and checked by a superior necessity of the action of the play.

12. *Shakespeare's Universality.*—We have shown, more or less clearly, the link which joins Shakespeare to his contemporaries, how he was like them and how he surpassed them. The

study has been much too limited for a poet who, in Jonson's words, "was not of an age, but of all time." So astonishingly widespread is his glory, that it might also be said that "he was not of a land, but of all lands." We ought to notice certain other characteristics which distinguish him from his English rivals less than they place him in opposition to the classical drama. The most important of all is the frequent complexity of his characters, which, as a rule, are not represented only within the short span of a crisis. Shakespeare took advantage of the wide allowance of space under his dramatic system, the twenty or so scenes into which each of his plays is, on an average, divided, and showed his heroes at various moments of their lives, in changing situations and in colloquy with different persons. They are not obliged to sustain one attitude, but have time to move and alter. No simple principle accounts for them. They have life and life's indefiniteness, and therefore they are not always fully intelligible, but are mysteries. It is even possible to ask whether Shakespeare himself understood them all. Had he analytical comprehension of Hamlet? The watchmaker understands the watch he has made, but "it is a wise father that knows his own child." Thus it is that many Shakespearean beings, whose reality cannot for an instant be questioned, do not admit of too precise investigation or are differently interpreted by different critics. But even as they evolve and their complexity increases, an art of which the secret escapes us preserves the illusion of their identity through all their changes.

Another great characteristic of Shakespeare's genius is an undefinable alertness and mobility which keep attention on the stretch. His prodigious vitality remains unimpaired after three centuries. It seems to grow every time he is read. Something of the mystery belongs to him which Enobarbus noticed in Cleopatra's charm:

> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety: other women cloy
> The appetites they feed: but she makes hungry
> Where most she satisfies.

No other literature, whatever its beauty, does not seem monotonous after Shakespeare. Free of every theory, accepting all of life, rejecting nothing, uniting the real and the poetic,

appealing to the most various men, to a rude workman as to a wit, Shakespeare's drama is a great river of life and beauty. All who thirst for art or truth, the comic or the tender, ecstasy or satire, light or shade, can stoop to drink from its waters, and at almost every instant of their changing moods find the one drop to slake their thirst.

CHAPTER VII

SHAKESPEARE'S CONTEMPORARIES AND IMMEDIATE SUCCESSORS[1]

1. *George Chapman.*[2]—Shakespeare's rivals were found, as might be expected, in the camp of the humanists. The hostility first shown to him by Greene and the University Poets was renewed by Chapman and Jonson. Not that these playwrights took from him, more than others, his foremost place in the popular favour, but they seem, from time to time, to have trumpeted more loudly than the rest their literary qualifications, the attainments which they could contrast arrogantly with Shakespeare's slight equipment of learning, his "small Latin and less Greek."

George Chapman (1559?-1634), famous for his translation of Homer, began to write plays somewhat late in life, when he was nearly forty years old. In so doing he seems less to have followed a vocation than to have been attracted by the extraordinary popularity of the theatre. Men who would in any other period have held aloof from the stage at this time wrote comedies and tragedies for the sake of applause as much as money.

Saving that he was a great reader of Greek and Latin authors, not excepting the Neo-Latinists of the Renascence, on whom he drew considerably, Chapman was all but destitute of the qualities we esteem classical. Almost more than any of his contemporaries, he lacked the faculty of composition and clarity of intelligence. He possessed, on the other hand, and to a rare degree, the romantic exaltation of the Elizabethans with its qualities and defects. He shared their flights and falls, their

[1] Mézières, *Contemporains et successeurs de Shakespeare* (1863).

[2] Ed. R. H. Shepherd, 3 vols. (1889); selected plays published in the Mermaid Series, ed. W. L. Phelps (1895); *All Fools* and *The Gentleman Usher*, ed. T. M. Parrott (Belles Lettres Series, 1907); *Bussy d'Ambois* and *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois*, ed. Boas (Belles Lettres Series, 1906); *Plays and Poems: the Tragedies*, ed. Parrott (1910); *Charlemagne*, ed. F. Schoell (Princeton University Press, 1920). See F. Schoell, "Une source nouvelle de Chapman," in *Revue Germanique* (July-August 1923).

audacities of style, their moments of nobility and splendour, their long intervals of senselessness and obscurity. Saved from extravagance when he was kept within bounds by the author he was translating, he was apt to flounder when he adventured alone. He had not the guidance of reason or good taste or even that of mere good sense.

His magniloquence and his assured self-confidence were none the less imposing. He made others share his own belief that he was possessed of a poetic demon. It is to-day generally accepted that he is the rival poet to whom Shakespeare, in his sonnets, gives praise mixed with irony. He speaks of "the proud full sail of his great verse," and of

> his spirit, by spirits taught to write
> Above a mortal pitch.

Chapman's talent has most relation to the frenzied genius of Marlowe, whose senior he was by five years and whose impetuous eloquence he admired. He concluded Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, revived Tamburlaine's declaiming in his tragedies, and followed the example of Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris* by seeking subjects for gloomy plays in contemporary French history.

His best-known tragedies are *Bussy d'Ambois*, which may have been written as early as 1598, although it was not published until 1607, the *Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* (Ambois stands for Amboise), published in 1614, and the *Conspiracy*, followed by the *Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Biron*, both published in 1608. The subject of the first two of these plays goes back to the reign of Henry III. of France. They are concerned with Bussy, the famous bully and lover of the Countess of Montsoreau whom Dumas made so popular two hundred and fifty years later. Biron is the marshal who was the friend of Henry IV. and who betrayed his master, was pardoned, repeated his offence while he was ambassador in London, was called upon to confess what he had done, and, on his refusal, put to death in 1602. Chapman closely follows the English translation, published in 1607, of the versions of this affair by Serres and Mathieu. Since Henry IV. was still alive he could hardly have found a more recent topic. The French ambassador protested, in spite of the fine part which the king is made to play, and backed his protest by citing a prohibition to actors to bring any living Christian

king on to the stage. Both the events and the characters of the play are historical. Chapman is one of the few authors of the day who attempted to represent Frenchmen without caricature. But his work is diffuse; it contains too much speechifying and too little movement. The characters are monotonous. Biron is too constantly an arrogant braggart. Yet, for all that this central figure is swollen with conceit and animated by immoderate ambition, the ten acts devoted to him are Chapman's most measured and correct contribution to tragedy.

Dramatically, however, *Bussy d'Ambois* is Chapman's most interesting work. In it this learned poet, whose head was filled with mythology, this impetuous, fuliginous lyricist, is seen at work upon a melodrama.

Following an unknown source, he shows a complete ignorance of the real France, but has no satirical intention. He mingles authentic facts with his own inventions. He transforms Bussy into a stage hero, after Marlowe, and lends him a power of wild declamation. This Bussy has placed his incredible valour at the service first of the Duke of Anjou, the king's brother, and then of the king himself, and the courtiers rage and tremble as much at his unbounded freedom of speech as at his sword-play. He avenges himself for their insults in the time of his poverty and friendlessness. He wins the favour of the Duchess of Guise in the teeth of the duke, not because he loves her but out of bravado and revenge. He claims the right himself to do justice to himself. Unfortunately he not only is the vehicle for the poet's independence, but must also bear the burden of his foggiest metaphors.

But the really original character in the play is the Countess of Montsoreau (or Montsurry, as the author calls her), to whom Chapman gives the romantic Christian name of Tamyra. This study of a devout woman, a Puritan in love, is, if not very true or coherent, both interesting and new. Situations proper to comedy are introduced in the midst of the most tragic plot. Tamyra is known at the court of Henry III. for her virtue, loves her husband and is loved by him. Her good conduct is conspicuous in the dissipated society in which she moves. When the Duke of Anjou coarsely seeks to seduce her, she answers him firmly and wittily and with proper indignation at his cynicism. When she is rallied for her faithfulness to her husband, she replies nobly

and gravely, as a matron should. Yet at the very moment when she is thus finely defending herself, she has ceased to be a virtuous wife. Irresistible passion had, from her first meeting with him, swept her on towards surrender to the brilliant Bussy in all the bravery of his daring. She is dazzled so that she can hardly hide her feeling from other women. It is all she can do not to betray her jealousy of the Duchess of Guise whom she believes Bussy to love, and whose guilty passion she blames with her lips while she envies it in her heart. Love has stricken her suddenly and irresistibly; she is the victim of fatality. When she has made up her mind to sin she still preserves the appearance of virtue, not only before her husband, whom she betrays, but also before her confessor, the Friar, her tool and accomplice, and even before the very lover to whom she gives herself. This dualism, persistently continued to the end of the play, is as much in the nature of a satire on feminine hypocrisy as part of the portrait of a real woman. Bussy, when once he is Tamyra's lover, cannot refrain from mocking her Puritan scruples, whereupon she tremblingly invokes the God whose wrath she fears, but immediately afterwards, when her husband returns, makes up for her piety by a double dose of lies.

All through these scenes we feel that Chapman is on the brink of a very bold and very penetrating psychological study, but his hand is not sure enough and he deviates into the improbable. The idea of treating frailty and hypocrisy no longer, after the manner of the fabliaux, as comic, but as grievous and agonising, is interesting. With a little more knowledge of the heart, Chapman might here have written Shakespearean scenes. But he would first have had to render his Tamyra plausible, and this he fails to do. In the remainder of the play she endures so much torture that she becomes pathetic. Her husband, when he knows himself betrayed, compels her, stabbing her with his dagger, to write a letter which causes Bussy to fall into an ambush. The remorse she still feels wrings from her a cry which is really moving:

> Heaven, I ask thee remission of my sins,
> Not of my pains.

The story of the love of Bussy and Tamyra forms the best part of this unequal tragedy, and deserved to save it from Dryden's absolute condemnation, merited though this be by the

ious declaiming of Bussy, whose life certainly gave him no ght to the pose of a champion of virtue assigned to him by hapman. Dryden had Bussy's tirades in mind when he defined is play: "a dwarfish thought, dressed up in gigantic words, epetition in abundance, looseness of expression, and gross yperboles; the sense of one line expanded prodigiously into ten; and, to sum up all, uncorrect English, and a hideous mingle of false poetry and true nonsense."

As compared with this first play on Bussy, that which shows the hero's revenge is as much less dramatic as it is more reasonable. It is Chapman's *Hamlet*. The hero, this time, is Clermont d'Ambois(e), Bussy's brother, whom Bussy's ghost incites to vengeance, but who is too philosophical not to hold violence in horror, so that he delays long before he accomplishes his task. When he has avenged Bussy he kills himself.

It is something of a surprise to find that Chapman also attempted comedy, and not without success. His best comedies are *All Fools*, printed in 1605, and *Monsieur d'Olive* and the *Gentleman Usher*, published in 1606. Here he abandons his forced, uneasy lyricism, if not his habit of moralising. The value of the plays lies in a certain pleasant romanticism rather than i their character-drawing. *All Fools*, modelled on Terence, is lesson to fathers: the indulgent and the severe father are painte in contrast, Chapman sympathising with the more benign of th two. *Monsieur d'Olive* is nearer being a comedy of character: represents a gallant whose unfailing quick-wittedness and cooln are amusing, but who is dropped all too soon in favour of anot plot. Chapman's best claim to merit as a writer of comedy r on his collaboration with Ben Jonson and Marston in *Eastw Ho*, but it is nearly impossible to determine the part he had i composition of this excellent satire on middle-class manne which we shall have to speak later.

2. *Ben Jonson* (1573?-1637).[1]—Chapman had a

[1] Ed. by Gifford in 9 vols. (1816); this edition revised by Cunnin 9 vols. (1875), and in 3 vols. (Chatto and Windus, 1889). Ed. by C. H. in the Mermaid Series, 3 vols. (1893-4). Ed. Herford and Simpson (Oxfor in 1925, in progress. Critical editions of many plays in Yale Stud *Alchemist* and *Eastward Ho*, ed. by F. E. Schelling in Belles Lettr *Every Man in His Humour*, ed. by Percy Simpson (Oxford University Pr *Catiline, His Conspiracy*, ed. L. H. Harris (1921).
Studies: M. Castelain, *Ben Jonson: l'Homme et l'Œuvre* (1907); Gre *Ben Jonson* (English Men of Letters Series, 1919); Mézières, *Prédécess*

nothing of the humanist except his erudition. By temperament he was a romantic, and saving when he took a ghost from Seneca or a theme from Terence, he followed the free methods of the popular English theatre. The man who resolutely took up the position of a disciple of the ancients, and attempted, under their inspiration, to reform the English stage, was Ben Jonson. He it is who in his own time and ever afterwards provided the typical antithesis to Shakespeare. The honour is one he deserves, because his works have real value and because his attitude was conspicuous.

His lengthy career as a dramatist (1597-1633), the relatively large amount of extant information regarding his life and character, his combativeness which brought him into conflict with several of his fellow-playwrights, the numerous allusions and satirical portraits in his plays, his expositions of theory and his sarcastic references to his public, perhaps make him, rather than Shakespeare, the rightful centre for a study of Renascence drama. He belongs moreover to the generation, born some ten years after Shakespeare, which was the most prolific of variously talented writers. He was the contemporary of Dekker, Marston, Middleton, Fletcher, Tourneur, Webster and Thomas Heywood, with every one of whom he was connected: he was the friend of some and quarrelled with several others.

In one sense, if the mark of originality be resistance to the general current, he was more original than Shakespeare. Shakespeare accepts the conditions of the stage of his time, is aware of its shortcomings, but resigns himself to them with a smile. His relations with his public remain sympathetic. Jonson, however, is in angry and arrogant opposition to the Elizabethan stage, and sets up his own tastes, ideas and theories, all derived from the ancients, against the popular taste. Shakespeare follows with docility the course of the stream; Jonson flings his vast bulk against it.

A pupil, at Westminster School, of William Camden, the famous antiquary, and a graduate of Cambridge, Jonson was truly learned. Throughout his life he copied into a notebook passages which struck him during his reading of the ancients,

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temporains de Shakespeare (1881); P. Reyher, *Les Masques anglais* (1909); W. Hazlitt, *The English Comic Writers* (ed. 1903); A. C. Swinburne, *A Study of Ben Jonson* (1889); J. A. Symonds, *Ben Jonson* (English Worthies, 1886)

and he repeatedly had recourse to these excerpts when he was writing, adapting them, if necessary, to the circumstances of his own time. He was acquainted not only with the great writers of antiquity but also with forgotten, mediocre authors and with the commentators and critics. He was as well read in the historians as in the poets. When he brings antiquity back to life his work is amply documented and he betrays an accurate conception of manners and customs. When he paints the society of his own day, he has made an equally careful preliminary study, notebook in hand, and has, like a modern impressionist, brought together numerous details from the life, picturesque touches, strange things he has seen and speeches—especially foolish speeches—which he has heard.

(*a*) HIS COMEDIES.—Temperamentally Ben Jonson was a satirist and his education made him a realist. His first play was indeed a half-romantic comedy, *The Case Is Altered* (1597), an amalgam of the *Captivi* and the *Aulularia* of Plautus, but in 1598 *Every Man in His Humour,* his first celebrated and really personal work, revealed his true tendencies. Its scene was first laid in Italy, but almost at once he changed it to London, showing clearly that the characters he has sketched are English and the outcome of direct observation.

We are introduced to a set of eccentrics. Each has his particular "humour," his prevailing mood or rather his oddity, mental habit, or fad. Jonson wishes to make humour the capital characteristic on which all others depend, but it is individual oddities that he mainly portrays. His method is that of Dickens, whose cheerfulness he however lacks, for he is a satirist rather than an amusing writer, and painstaking rather than spontaneous. The fixed, narrow limits of his characterisation were opposed to the uses of his contemporary playwrights, who gave their characters full play, developing them spaciously and endowing them, even to excess, with complexity and the faculty of growth, so that they sometimes became incoherent. These other dramatists made stereotyped oddity the characteristic only of their secondary characters. It was only to the Pistols and the Nyms that Shakespeare gave "humours." Jonson bestows them on all his characters and especially the principals. In his play there is an old gentleman who is exaggeratedly worried because his son, a young poet, is sowing his wild oats: it is the father's "humour" thus to

plague himself. There is a merchant whose "humour" it is to be a jealous husband; two young self-confident and foolish fops, the town gull and the country gull, exist but to be duped; an honest, optimistic magistrate has unshakable faith in the virtues of a cup of sack; and Bobadil, a blusterer of a new kind, takes everyone in by his decorous manners, his reticence like that of a man sure of himself, and the calm voice in which he utters his improbable boasts. Bobadil rivals Falstaff in ready lying, but remains a quite distinct and original type.

In that he excludes romanticism and is careful to sustain the comic tone of his comedy, Jonson shows himself the disciple of the ancients. There is no mingling of more sensational elements. He had the sense of the appropriate in so high a degree that in the second edition of his play he eliminated, as too warm in tone and pitched in too lofty a key, an eloquent apology for poetry which occurs in the first edition.

The structure is, however, no closer than elsewhere and no progress towards true unity is evinced. This initial work and the plays which followed it immediately are rather reviews of grotesque types than strongly constructed comedies. It is very remarkable that Jonson assimilated classical qualities only gradually, one by one, it might be said, and never displayed them all in one work. At this stage he could not yet take credit, as he does in the prologue printed in 1616, for having got rid of anything more than the gross licence and puerilities of staging which Sidney had derided.

He was, moreover, self-deceived when he thought that he had substituted real men for stage "monsters." With his inclination to notice only obvious individual peculiarities or the violent actions of exceptional persons, his almost total disregard of fundamental feelings common to mankind and his ignorance of love, Jonson never got near to nature in the classical meaning of the word. To find in his plays a character who is merely a man or a woman is almost impossible. In this, the essential respect, Jonson is far less classical than Shakespeare.

In his later comedies his satirical attitude is accentuated. In *Every Man Out of His Humour* he himself is Asper, the harsh and pitiless judge of whatever is ridiculous or vicious, a cynic descended from Diogenes. Like Persius or Juvenal he cries:

I'll strip the ragged follies of the time,
Naked, as at their birth,

and

with a whip of steel
Print wounding lashes in their iron ribs.

More than one of the grotesques in his play is probably the caricature of an actual person who was recognised by a section of the public. But the portraits undoubtedly exaggerate the eccentricity and extravagance of their subjects: Deliro, the idolising husband consistently rebuffed by his wife; Puntarvolo, the mad, quixotic gentleman who lives a chivalrous romance, entering his house as though it were a strong castle, winding the horn that his door may be opened to him, making his own wife come to the threshold in response to his knight-errant's challenge; Fastidious Brisk, the courtier absorbed by his own dress and fatuous as a Molière marquis, who fights with another courtier a comic duel in which not a drop of blood is shed, but the two lacerate each other's smart clothes and ornaments; Fungoso, the law-student who imitates Fastidious Brisk and extorts money from his father to copy his clothes but can never keep up with his model, who has always adopted a new fashion just when the copy is complete; Sordido, the miserly father and assiduous peruser of almanacks, who thinks of hanging himself in order to prove the prophets wrong.

It is curious to find this extravagance within a realistic framework and introduced in the tones of realism. This play and its predecessor reproduce so much that belongs to the manners of their time, that London and London life in 1600 might be partly reconstituted with their aid. Much trouble and investigation has gone to produce the abundant details, and yet the result is ungrateful, tedious in the extreme, scrappy and seldom amusing. We are surfeited with satire and sigh in vain for a scene which would simply show humanity. The approval which Jonson constantly claims from his audience, and his ill-will to everyone and everything and faith in himself and his own superiority are moreover irritating. His preoccupation with himself is in contrast to the modesty with which Shakespeare invariably sinks his personality in his work, is never to be found or seen. Jonson deems his personal quarrels interesting enough to furnish scenes for his plays or even whole plays. He, the representative of reason, morality and knowledge, does not fear to bring his enemies upon

the stage. *Cynthia's Revels* (1601) and, even more, *The Poetaster* (1602) are so many acts of homage to himself, not to mention the prologues, epilogues and inductions in which he obtrudes his personality.

In *The Poetaster* he is Horace, whose friend is Virgil, whose admirer is Augustus, and to whom the bad poets Crispinus (Marston) and Demetrius (Dekker) are jealous enemies. Nothing opposes him save foolishness, envy and malignity. The whole of this Roman allegory is constructed for the author's greater glory. Latin poetry is used to provide him with a sort of apotheosis. The aggressive character of his early work connects him with ancient Greek comedy, with Aristophanes and his direct and personal satires. But, unlike the Greek dramatist, Jonson is incapable of generalising his antipathies, of transforming them into broad lessons on politics and morality.

These plays do not represent the whole of Jonson's achievement. The series of his personal plays provoked retorts from Marston and Dekker and mainly gave matter for what has been called the War of the Theatres, each antagonist having his playhouse whence he let fire on the enemy. Subsequently Jonson rose to the level both of tragedy and of high comedy. The great comedies of the period of his maturity, *Volpone, or the Fox (1605), Epicœne, or the Silent Woman (1609), The Alchemist* (1610) and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), are among the most remarkable of the dramatic works of the English Renascence.

In these he does not merely pass types of eccentricity in review. He turns his powerful intellect to the construction of his plays and endeavours to make them strong as Roman buildings. Far from drawing on the old repertory of subjects, according to Shakespeare's habit, he invents everything, his matter, plot and characters, which are in turn the creations of his logical mind and the fruits of his direct observation of eccentricities.

Of all these plays, it is *Volpone* which is the most powerful and also most in the tradition of the morality-plays. It is a violent attack, not unreminiscent of Marlowe's extravagance, on cupidity and mean avarice and Machiavellism. Since it contains hardly anything to balance its display of vices, the view it gives of human nature is cynical, analogous to that so persistently put forward by the French *théâtre rosse* of the end of last century, for which

school of drama Jonson might have provided most striking models.

Volpone is a Venetian magnifico, old, rich, childless and a passionate devotee of every form of enjoyment, in particular the enjoyment of gold. Surrounded by false friends anxious to inherit from him, he gives out that he is dying, and by persuading each of them that he is the heir designate obtains magnificent presents from them all. Any one of them, out of a frenzied cupidity equal to Volpone's own, is capable of sacrificing honour, child or wife to his chance of engrossing the inheritance. Between Volpone, the Fox, and these appropriately named beasts of prey—the lawyer, Voltore or Vulture, the dying Corbaccio or Old Crow, and the Merchant, Corvino or Little Crow—the intermediary is Mosca or Fly, Volpone's parasite and a trimmer of infinite resource. There is something famished and superhuman in the passion of all these characters. Volpone's thirst for gold is as vehement, if not as poetic, as that which torments Marlowe's Jew of Malta. Yet the enormity of the fraud he has organised is an even greater joy to him than his gold. For sheer ferocity, no scene has ever surpassed that in which the aged, crippled, blear-eyed Corbaccio, with one foot in the grave, comes to sniff at the body of the man whose death he has discounted, or that other scene in which Corvino, whom a trifle has roused to vent a fit of terrible jealousy on his wife, the pure Celia, drags her, by threats and violence, to the presence of Volpone, who has made this surrender a condition of the succession to his property. In yet another and no less ferocious scene, Volpone, who has been given up to justice, is shown standing his trial. Each of his dupes comes forward to speak for him, each of them warmly eloquent, improving on the statements of the rival he uneasily watches, and inventing the most abominable lies, even against a son or a wife, to exculpate the accused man.

The playwright's vigour, his clever manipulation of the threads of his plot and the strong construction render almost credible the inhuman situation which is the subject of the play. But its success is void of the element of fun, for the atrocity of the satire excludes laughter. In *Epicœne,* however, Jonson aims at producing merriment. For once he sacrifices his moral to his design of pleasing the public. Some scenes in his plays are intended, he says,

. . . for ladies; some for lords, knights, 'squires;
Some for your waiting wench, and city wives;
Some for your men, and daughters of Whitefriars.

He has suddenly passed from one extreme to the other. His theme is no longer execrable vice, but a whim, an oddity. Fundamentally *Epicœne* is of the nature of a farce, but it is at least as robustly constructed as *Volpone*, so that Dryden regarded it as the model of a well-made comedy. The chief character is Morose, an egoistical bachelor who nowadays would be called a neurasthenic. His special "humour" is his abhorrence of noise. He lives in a blind alley, and makes war on all who cry their wares in the street, has his front-door muffled, keeps his shutters closed, and quilts his staircase. His servants have orders to answer him only by signs: his own voice is the only noise he will tolerate. Jonson took this character not from real life, but from the pages of the Greek rhetorician Libanius, and he lodged him in London among thoroughly English eccentrics.

The subject of the comedy is Morose's marriage to a young girl reputed to be always silent. He marries her in order to disinherit his nephew to whom he has taken a dislike. But the girl has been secretly chosen for his uncle by this mischievous nephew, and she is no sooner married than she proves talkative and noisy to the last degree. The wedding is an excuse for a boisterous hubbub which maddens the old man. He wants a divorce before the day is out, and pretexts for it are vainly sought in a learnedly grotesque consultation with pretended lawyers. Finally the nephew agrees to save his uncle in return for a goodly sum of money, paid cash down, and reveals that the bride is a youth disguised for the occasion.

The situation lends itself to scenes of pure clowning: Morose is surrounded by a most heteroclite company, all, naturally, as noisy as they can be—a barber, a coxcomb, an amateur of sport and a whole society of *précieuses ridicules*. Energetically, perhaps too assiduously, the play calls for laughter. Even when he is writing farce, Jonson is weighted with the spoils of his learned reading and the raw scraps of realism which he pours into his prose. The fruits of his observation mingle strangely with curiosities he has culled from the ancients. He is too little spontaneous; like Flaubert, he is too industrious and too learned to evoke light laughter.

In *The Alchemist* he returns to satirical comedy. Once more he is denouncing rogues. Face, a servant, brings a swindler named Subtle to his master's house while the latter is absent in London. Subtle poses as an alchemist, and the hope of the philosopher's stone causes men of every kind to have resort to him—a lawyer's clerk, a tobacco-merchant and a great gentleman, Sir Epicure Mammon, who is constantly preoccupied by dreams of magnificence and voluptuous desires. Among these seekers after gold are two Puritan Brethren of Amsterdam who give the playwright his first real chance to ridicule the sect hostile to the stage. In this remarkably constructed comedy, which, unlike its predecessors, has a theme of lasting interest longer-lived than alchemy—the exploitation of the foolish and the vicious by unscrupulous rogues who dazzle them with riches—prominence is chiefly given to the rhetoric of Sir Epicure, whose rodomontade recalls Marlowe, and to the intrigues of the Puritans. The whole of this nascent sect is resumed in the sinuous, politic and adroit Parson Tribulation Wholesome and in the stupid, violent, uncompromising Deacon Ananias, whom, not without difficulty, the parson forces to accept the doctrine that the end justifies the means. Ananias is horrified at the idea of having recourse to a pagan like Subtle, but Tribulation reproaches him for ill-timed zeal and pictures to him their sect enriched and made powerful by gold, no longer obliged to intrigue pettily and fish for small bequests. Finally, after prayer and fasting, the Brethren of Amsterdam decide that they will avail themselves of the alchemist's services. In the end duper and dupes are, needless to say, duly punished.

Bartholomew Fair returns, with more insistence, to the attack on Puritanism. The chief character is Rabbi Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, a man of low origin who has acquired a great renown for sanctity and who, like Molière's Tartuffe in Orgon's family, has wormed himself into the confidence of the well-to-do Widow Purecraft until nothing is done in her household without his advice. Thus, when Mrs. Littlewit, the daughter of the house, is seized with a longing to eat pig from the fair, Busy's consent is first asked and is given on condition the pig "be eaten with a reformed mouth." Everyone then sets out for the fair, where Busy guzzles more than anyone else, and in his cups upsets a hawker's basket of gingerbread, which he calls a "basket of

popery." He is put in the stocks, and concludes by interrupting a puppet-show which he regards as a symbol of the public stage, that abomination of abominations.

Jonson certainly wrote nothing more entertaining than this play. It would, however, have been more completely diverting had he drawn his Puritan more decidedly, had he not made him, by turns or simultaneously, an arrant hypocrite and an enthusiast as convinced as ridiculous. He should have chosen one or other of these alternatives. Similarly, his Mistress Purecraft is both a good and pious dupe and an intriguing widow to whom religion is a means to remarriage. These inconsistencies spoil the most animated and swarming, although far from the noblest, of Jonson's plays. The fair gives him an excuse for introducing a whole rabble of sharpers, vagabonds and ruffians and a whole troop of boobies, oddities and madcaps who haunt the stalls. All his comedies are rich in details taken from life and glimpses of actual manners, but no other as much so as *Bartholomew Fair*, for which he certainly made copious notes on the spot.

It was the last of his great comedies. After its appearance he ceased for nine years to work for the stage, and resumed playwriting as an older and enfeebled man of lessened powers, producing five further plays in the period cruelly called his dotage. They are *The Devil Is an Asse* (1616), *The Staple of News* (1625), *The New Inn* (1629), *The Magnetic Lady* (1632) and *A Tale of a Tub* (1633). Mediocre though they be, the observation they show of manners and passing fashions makes them interesting to this day to the social historian.

(b) His Roman Tragedies.—Jonson made two attempts at historical tragedy, his *Sejanus* (1603) and his *Catiline* (1611). Both, but especially the first, were inspired by the desire to emulate Shakespeare, the great success of whose *Julius Cæsar*, in 1601, had proved that the public could be interested in a subject taken from ancient history. Jonson was conscious that his knowledge of Roman history was far more exact than his rival's. He must have laughed at Shakespeare's anachronisms, if they did not scandalise him. Shakespeare's Rome was London, and he had a very scanty and inaccurate knowledge of Roman customs and manners, of all that goes to make local colour. His only guide was Plutarch, who is psychologist and moralist first of all, who writes of a period remote from his own and who,

further, is a Greek, all of which prevents him from paying attention to Latin scenery.

Shakespeare's shortcomings were supplied by Ben Jonson, whose tragedies are completely historical, reinforced by a thousand accurate details taken from the many and various poets and historians he had read. He studs his *Sejanus* with translated quotations, small incidents and curious touches borrowed from the authors of the period: Suetonius, Juvenal, Tacitus and Seneca. When he published the play he could cite the very editions which had been his sources. But while Shakespeare chose a subject familiar to everyone who had any culture at all, one made illustrious by the names of Cæsar, Brutus, Antony and Octavius and centring round the most famous episode in Roman history, Cæsar's murder in full Senate, Ben Jonson's erudite reading and disdain of the immediately popular turned his choice to the far less known career of Sejanus, whose triumph and fall he depicts. With his dominantly satirical temperament, he was attracted to this episode of the Roman decadence which shows vice and meanness conspicuously, rather than to the grandeur of such a struggle as that between a Cæsar and a Brutus.

It is in truth especially by his learning that Ben Jonson is removed from his forerunner. It would be false to think that he attempted to bring classical unity back into historical drama. He too used the expedient of a series of great, animated pictures, and they are neither less numerous nor less various than Shakespeare's. The action of his plays is perhaps a little closer knit, but this is a difference not of kind but of degree. It might even be said that Jonson gives more space than Shakespeare to homely scenes in the spirit of harsh, satirical comedy. No less than Shakespeare does he depart from the type of tragedy which *Gorboduc* inaugurated and Sidney recommended. His ambition to be an historian, to reproduce the manners and customs of imperial Rome faithfully, made a number of separate scenes even more necessary to him than to Shakespeare.

Sejanus is so strongly constructed, presents history so honestly, and is so full of vigorous and exact touches, that it cannot be read even to-day without respect for the author's learning and energy of mind. He reproduces forcefully the umbrageous, perfidious, cringing, sinuous Tiberius who enjoys watching popular hatred accumulate against his favourite, and delivers that unfor-

tunate to the people as soon as he begins to fear him. Jonson supplies a moral explanation of the fall of Sejanus in his impiety —his mockery of all the deities save the goddess Fortune, to whom indeed he renders homage, but whose images he throws down when she answers his prayer unfavourably. The philosophy of Sejanus is, like that of Marlowe's sinners, Machiavellian. With special force Jonson paints imperial corruption and the plague of informers. His pictures of manners overshadow his character-drawing. Thus we have the scene in which Livia plots the murder of her husband Drusus with Sejanus and her doctor Eudemus, and discourses learnedly of make-up and rouge while she continues her toilet; the scene in which an agent of the emperor, after hiding informers behind the door, entraps the honourable Sabinus by declaiming against tyranny in his presence, until he too begins a rebellious speech, at the first word of which he is led off to the Gemoniæ; and finally the famous scene in which the tortuous letter of Tiberius is read to the Senate and the anxious servility of the senators is displayed as, one after another, they fawn on Sejanus, then shun him like the plague, and finally, with one accord, clamour for his death.

Everywhere there is strength, dignity, knowledge—indeed too much knowledge, too much erudition, too much massive, dull speechifying. The sources of true dramatic emotion are never sounded. Thus Sejanus is shown arranging with Livia the disappearance of Drusus, whom they decide to murder, but there is no scene to show Sejanus persuading Livia to this act, the scene to which a Shakespeare or a Racine would have given precedence over all others, making it the great moment of the play. The psychology of *Sejanus* is little less elementary than that of the moralities, which divided mankind into good and bad. None of the characters goes through any interior conflict. The honest senators are not tempted, the informers suffer no remorse. The characters are very close to history, too close perhaps, for they remain remote from us. They are not brought nearer by imagination and dramatic sympathy.

Jonson, on his own confession, felt some repentance for his transgression of classical laws in this play, the liberties he took with the unity of time and his failure to use choruses. He did better in *Catiline*, in which he announces his intention to be cor-

rect and draws nearer to Seneca. This tragedy opens with a speech by Sulla's shade, who appears to Catiline. Each act, except the last, ends with a chorus. The subject, confined to Catiline's conspiracy without going back to its causes, is more restricted in time. But these entirely external differences do not prevent this play from being cast in the mould traditional in England. It is divided into twenty scenes. Its action is less straightforward than that of *Sejanus*, because in the first two acts Jonson transposes history for the purposes of poetry and satire, while in the other three he follows history step by step, so literally that he reproduces Cicero's first Catilinarian oration almost in its entirety. Faithfulness in this part of the play is very like slavishness.

On the whole, *Catiline* is inferior to *Sejanus*. The characters are drawn less vigorously and clearly. It is impossible to tell whether Catiline be actuated by cupidity, anger or love for his mistress Orestilla. Does he really love Orestilla or does he make her his tool? We do not know. Cicero is as worthy and complex as history shows him. He retains all the vagueness of mere history, for Jonson does not so much interpret documents as empty their contents into his tragedy. No light supplied by the poet is shed on the actors in the drama, whose figures are clear or dim as history left them, even such confused history as that constituted by the conflicting narratives of Cicero and Sallust.

In this imperfect play there is, however, one whole act which is as much of a success as anything Ben Jonson ever wrote. It is the second act, which was invented by the playwright and illlustrates the same truth as Scribe's *Verre d'eau*, namely that the greatest events of history sometimes have the most trifling causes.

How was the conspiracy discovered? To tell us this, Jonson transports us to the house of the young and beautiful courtesan Fulvia. She is jealous of Sempronia, a scholarly and lettered patrician who makes up for her faded charms by her wit and her hospitable table. Sempronia, visiting Fulvia, recommends Catiline as a candidate for the consulate, and no more is needed to secure him the courtesan's ill-will. Her lover is Curius, who happens to be among the conspirators and whom she dismisses because he is ruined. He thereupon breaks into vague threats, telling her she will wish him back, for presently he will be one of the masters of Rome. Her countenance changes; she recalls

him, and with flattery and caresses extorts from him his secret, giving him her love once more on condition that he betray Catiline. Thus Cicero is warned and enabled to compass the ruin of the conspirators. These cynical scenes are in Jonson's most spirited vein, already displayed when he was writing *Volpone*. Ferocious satire is the special distinguishing mark of his talent, and recurs at the most impressive moments of his tragedies as of his comedies.

Yet there was a poet in this robust and harsh writer. The fact becomes clear as we read his fragment of a pastoral, *The Sad Shepherd, or a Tale of Robin Hood,* in which he pleasantly disposes factitious pastoral graces about the popular archer and his companions. It is made even clearer by the numerous masques which he wrote for the court of James I. No one composed a greater number of books of words for the magnificent operas which were then the supreme luxury of the king and his lords. No one turned them more cleverly, wrote them better or gave them more variety or charm. The blunt-speaking playwright whose blank verse was hard, unpliable and without ring, had an unexpected facility when he was busy over these diversions in which allegory, mythology and the fairy-tale reigned. Many songs and short lyrics can be culled from them to protest against the too narrow judgment we might be tempted to pass on his otherwise massive and prosaic spirit. Poetry must indeed have been in the air in those days. How otherwise could it have lodged, abundantly and in endearing guise, in a corner of the work of this robust craftsman whose cynical realism inclined him to prose? His nature was broader and richer than appears from his theories. He was capable of such lyrical fancy as Molière, in a more sober age, never matched.

3. *John Marston (1575?-1634).*[1]—Of the two dramatists against whom Jonson was most implacable early in the seventeenth century, Marston and Dekker, Marston engaged him most and received his hardest knocks. The conflict was between two satirical, arrogant men, of whom Marston was foul-tongued into the bargain. His first literary essay was the collection of satires or rather coarse insults called *The Scourge of Villainy* (1598), of which we have already spoken. Subsequently, for eight or nine years, he tried his fortunes in drama, and met with very fair

[1] Works edited by Bullen. 3 vols (1887).

success before he abandoned writing entirely and gave himself up to a long, silent ecclesiastical career.

His dramatic production belongs to the most glorious and most intensely active period. Although an industrious student, his temperament inclined him to romantic drama. Yet shreds of the garment of Seneca clung to him, notably the ghost he took from Seneca's *Thyestes* and the conceptions of atrocious vengeance and of the horror of crime. He might, however, have found all this equally well in Kyd and Marlowe, and his first tragedies, *Antonio and Mellida* and, even more, *Antonio's Revenge*, show the influence of the *Spanish Tragedie*. Here, as in his satires, Marston seems to wish to attract attention by the most tumultuous violence, by using more furious and eccentric language and greater coarseness than any other writer. A contemporary comic author calls him "a ruffian in his style." Since elsewhere he gives unquestionable proofs of vigour of mind, it is his sincerity, rather than his talent, which is suspect. He declaims more rabidly than Marlowe, describes with metaphors almost as foggy and disjointed as Chapman's, piles up pedantic, trivial and mouth-filling words. This is the very Crispinus caricatured by Jonson in *The Poetaster*, who, after a dose, vomits up a fantastic rigmarole. Marston's description of a storm in *Antonio and Mellida* is an example of his extravagant bad taste. Yet there is something impressive in his very turgidity. The description which opens the prologue to *Antonio's Revenge* is hardly less exaggerated, but it leads up to lines so powerful that Lamb admired the whole with reason, as a fit prelude to a story which might be classed with the tales of Theban atrocity or the legend of Pelops. Marston's most detestably emphatic passages are interspersed with nervous eloquence. Similarly, his most sombre melodrama is lit up by flashes of true poetry, as in that scene of the *Revenge* (Act III.) in which, in a graveyard at midnight, Antonio strangles a little boy who is the youthful son of his father's murderer, whom he has hitherto treated as a brother and who trusts him entirely. The ghost of Antonio's father cries out for vengeance and shames him out of his pity. These romantic shudders connect Marston with Kyd and Webster.

There is also much of Shakespeare in him, or rather, since *Antonio's Revenge* is possibly prior to *Hamlet*, he has more than one point of contact with Shakespeare. This is even more appar-

ent in his comedy, *The Malcontent* (1601?), than in his tragedies. He introduces into this play a character who ironically comments on actions and personalities, underlines whatever is ridiculous or vicious, and deals blows right and left, and who voices Marston's own pessimism and cynical view of human motives. *The Malcontent* might be called a *Hamlet* which only a happy ending saves from tragedy. In some respects it also anticipates *Measure for Measure* and even *The Tempest*.

The Malcontent is a Duke of Genoa who has, owing to his over-trusting disposition, allowed himself to be supplanted by a usurper. He returns to his duchy in the guise of a cynic, becomes the usurper's helper, reveals to him the plots hatched against him, and takes his part when he in his turn falls from power. Finally the usurper, having suffered a change of heart, cedes his place to the Malcontent, who, with contemptuous clemency which foreshadows Prospero, grants a general pardon to the guilty. The interest of this ill-constructed comedy, with its very romantic episodes, lies in the sneers and the invectives of the Malcontent. The play centres in this true satirist who inveighs against all and sundry and proffers cynical reflections. It has, moreover, here and there, striking situations of which some are new. There is a scene, recalled by Jonson in *Sejanus*, in which the courtiers crowd round the Malcontent when he is in favour, but leave him shamelessly when the duke looks coldly at him; and another in which the usurper's wife, who with her lover has plotted his death, hears at a court ball the false news that he is dead and interrupts her informer by calling for music. Ford remembered this last incident when he wrote *The Broken Heart*. Over and over again in this play there are bold and compact touches. The sarcasm which was to be Hamlet's is expressed more vulgarly and often coarsely. The Malcontent, consoling the usurper for the loss of the duchy, exhorts him as follows: "Come, be not confounded. . . . Think this: this earth is the only grave and Golgotha wherein all things that live must rot; 'tis but the draught wherein the heavenly bodies discharge their corruption; the very muck-hill on which the sublunary orbs cast their excrements."

The work is on the whole unpleasing, obscure in style and muddled in construction, but it is forceful, varied and not without interest. It proves that plays of the type of *Hamlet* were popular

before the appearance of the ultimate *Hamlet* which was Shakespeare's. It seems to have been Marston who introduced the fashion of inveighing against society and life in a mood of lyrical irony. He attempts to outdo others by shouting louder than they. He often recalls or anticipates Shakespearean subjects, and for moments at a time he does not lose too much by the consequent comparison.

Marston's other comedies are less gloomy and have, as well as more cheerfulness, some flashes of tenderness. *The Dutch Courtesan* (1604) is a pendant to Dekker's *Honest Whore,* and the order in which the two plays appeared is doubtful. The heroine is no penitent Magdalen, cleansing her soul by sacrifice, but a passionate and potentially criminal woman.

Franceschina, a courtesan, has for some time been loved by young Freevill, a libertine who has sown his wild oats and aspires to the hand of a pure young girl, Beatrice. He introduces the courtesan to one of his friends, an austere and morose young man named Malheureux, who falls in love with her at first sight. But she is still in love with Freevill and is furious at the thought of his approaching marriage. She wants to get him back and rejects the advances of Malheureux until, seeing that all her efforts are vain, she tries to use her suitor to compass the death of the lover she has lost. But Malheureux is no criminal: he warns Freevill, who agrees to disappear temporarily in order that his friend may announce his death to Franceschina and receive her promised reward. She, however, like another Hermione, has no sooner heard that Freevill is slain than she gives way to grief and anger. She wants to have Malheureux hanged, and only Freevill's return saves him.

Meanwhile the course of Freevill's love for Beatrice has been crossed as the result of Franceschina's plotting and his own desire to put his beloved to trial. Beatrice believes that Freevill is dead and has been unfaithful. She is miserable and has thoughts of killing herself, but in the end everything turns out well.

In spite of the happy ending, there is little of comedy about the plot. Yet the play, which aims chiefly at affording amusement, never greatly disturbs equanimity and is really diverting. The principal plot is relieved by another, purely farcical, which shows a sharper's tricks, the practical jokes played by the rogue

Cockledemoy on a miserly, stupid and ridiculous citizen. Miscellaneous obscenities are scattered here and there and spoken by episodic characters.

The psychology is slight and the portrait of the courtesan rudimentary, yet there is something of everything in this play, even feeling and grace. Marston professes a desire to contrast the purity of legitimate love with the base and dangerous love of courtesans. His Beatrice is not without charm and Freevill courts her with a certain warmth.

The most individualised character is, however, Crispinella, Beatrice's younger sister. This child of fifteen, small of stature, terrifyingly outspoken, an innocent girl who talks like a trooper, who calls a spade a spade and utters everything she knows or thinks, is the ancestress of all the alarmingly frank young people of Restoration comedies. Marston is, naturally, too foul-mouthed to keep her within the limits beyond which frankness of this kind is disgusting rather than amusing. But he makes it very clear that, for all her loose talk, he intends to preserve both the true virginity and the real goodness of heart of his Crispinella. Artistically, her chief defect is that she is too self-conscious, too cognisant of her implications, yet she has to her credit some spontaneous, apposite and amusing sayings.

She was certainly inspired by the witty and incisive Beatrice of *Much Ado About Nothing,* and her relations with her elder sister recall those of Beatrice with her cousin Hero. It is a great pity that this happily conceived character is often soiled by cynicism, to the detriment of the pleasure which decent people might otherwise derive from her.

The same coarseness mars the *Parasitaster or the Fawn,* of which the idea is ingenious. The Duke of Ferrara is distressed by the coldness of his son Tiberio, who will not consent to marriage even with the fair Dulcimella, daughter of Gonzago, Duke of Urbino. The duke pretends to ask her hand for himself, and sends Tiberio to Urbino as his ambassador. Meanwhile, like the Malcontent, he adopts a disguise. As the Fawn, a privileged cynic, he establishes himself in Gonzago's court both to watch over his son and to observe the manners of the courtiers. There are curious sights to be seen there, and some ugly characters—an abominably jealous husband whom his virtuous wife at last succeeds in taming, a man who brags of his love affairs in high

places and has in fact lost his heart to a washerwoman; a youthful courtier who declares his passion to all the ladies indiscriminately.

Dulcimella has, however, fallen in love with Tiberio. To impart warmth to this icy suitor, she uses the same device as Molière's Agnes, making Gonzago, her foolish father, her go-between. He conveys to the young man her pretended anger at his attempts to win her, and thus instructs him in the course he should pursue. In this way she makes sure of getting him for her husband.

To sum up: this play contains a successful comic character—old Gonzago, the solemn idiot, reminiscent of Justice Shallow and Polonius, who never doubts his own sagacity even when he is being led by the nose—and some pretty love-scenes between Dulcimella and Tiberio. Dulcimella is like a coarse copy of one of Shakespeare's daring heroines. She has none of their poetry and not more than a quarter of their wit.

Marston's signature is also affixed to a powerful play, *The Insatiate Countess*, which depicts the furious love-affairs of a woman of the Messalina type and was printed in 1613. This work seems, however, to owe far less to Marston than to the actor William Barkstead who was his collaborator.

Marston is, further, one of the three signatories of *Eastward Ho* (1605), a play which is among the best of the Renascence comedies and which he wrote in collaboration with Chapman and Jonson. This work, which unites qualities evinced in none of the plays written by its authors separately, is curious. It is difficult to distinguish what each contributed to it, but certainly Chapman nowhere else shows such vigour and realism, Jonson so much light-heartedness or Marston such decency.

The very simple theme recalls the moralities. The industrious and the idle apprentice are drawn side by side, and they furnished Hogarth, when the play was revived in the eighteenth century, with the subject of one of his best-known pictures.

Touchstone, a very worthy city goldsmith, has two apprentices, the dissipated and extravagant Quicksilver who spends his leisure among gamesters and tipplers, and the orderly, respectable and virtuous Golding. Quicksilver, drunken and insolent, is suspected of theft and turned away, and he afterwards lives by his wits, is thrown into prison and is in danger of the gallows. He is, however, saved by his repentance, his piety during his impris-

onment and Golding's intervention, and in the end meets no worse fate than marriage with a girl he has debauched. Golding, meanwhile, receives the hand of his master's younger daughter, becomes a deputy-alderman and judges his fellow-apprentice, saving him out of the goodness of his heart. He is a model apprentice, model son-in-law, model husband and model friend.

The two apprentices are balanced by Touchstone's two daughters, the younger well behaved, sweet-tempered and modest; the older, a minx, ambitious to be fashionable, who, with the connivance of her pretentious mother, marries not an honest apprentice, like her sister, but a certain Sir Petronel Flash, a regular adventurer. She flatters herself that she will ride in her coach and be mistress of a fine house. But the house is Sir Petronel's invention, and while she is journeying thither very dashingly, having first shown her contempt for her citizen family, Petronel is planning to flee to Virginia with her dowry. He is put into prison, and vanity is duly brought low, the elder sister being obliged to implore mercy from the younger and from her father, to both of whom she has been amply disdainful.

This morality-play has much animation. It affords some vivid glimpses—the apprentices living in their master's household, the interior of his shop, vainglorious Gertrude starting off in her coach, dazzling all the neighbours. The apprentice Quicksilver, an assiduous playgoer, recites lines from the *Spanish Tragedie* in his cups. In a tavern the madcaps of the town are seen all agape while Captain Seagull relates to them the marvels of Virginia, where the first settlers were soon to meet with an evil fate.

In a scene laid by the Thames, Sir Petronel and Quicksilver, the one as drunk as the other, plunge into the water during a storm in order to swim to Captain Seagull's ship, and are cast up on to the river-bank. Still fuddled, they imagine that they have landed in France.

The drawing of the characters, especially the less virtuous of them, is vigorous, Quicksilver with his scapegrace high spirits, his rascality and his conversion and the moral ballads in which he embodies his adventures for the edification of his prison-mates; Gertrude with the airs she gives herself and the romantic dreams in which she still indulges long after misfortune has overtaken her: these are memorable portraits.

There is throughout this play a lively realism which gains credence for the moral concealed beneath its varied and comic incidents. And all goes merrily forward to the end. No structural devices obtrude themselves.

Whatever part Marston may have had in the writing of this play, it does him greater credit than any which he produced by himself. Nevertheless, these last also, in spite of the extravagance of some and the crudity of all and their element of imitation, are proof that the playwright possessed an incisive, nervous and often original talent which was of service to several of his contemporaries.

4. *Thomas Dekker (1570?-1641).*[1]—Although Jonson associated Marston and Dekker in his attacks, they are no less different from each other than they are from him. Both of them did indeed write plays in which all the liberty and also all the licence of the English stage are to be found, but while Marston's habitual cynicism and pessimism connect him with Jonson, there is in Dekker's work a vein of poetry and optimism, a tenderness and charm, which the other two playwrights lack. While Marston and Jonson are, like Chapman, manifestly under the influence of Marlowe with his passionate rhetoric and violent and excessive characterization, Dekker takes us back to Robert Greene, who, in spite of the air of pedantry intermittently imparted to his style by too much mythology, was the one of the earlier dramatists least disturbed by the Renascence and most independent of antiquity. Dekker is in the succession to Greene by his prose writings, which are for the most part pictures of life among the London populace, the low life of the town with its misery, vice and eccentricities. In many little street scenes this author, who had to boil his pot, has assembled the results of his own observation and of his reading of the satirists, has collected pithy sayings and good-tempered jokes. He is something of an improviser and an artist only by snatches, but he is alive and spontaneous; his pen runs easily and he is pleasing.

His plays also connect him with Greene. A composite romanticism was inherent in him: he rebelled against all law,

[1] *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker,* reprinted by Pearson, 4 vols. (1873). Selected works in the Mermaid Series, ed. Rhys (1895); *The Shoemaker's Holiday,* ed. Warnke and Proescholdt (Halle, 1886); *Old Fortunatus,* ed. Smeaton in the Temple Dramatists (1906); Jonson's *Poetaster* and Dekker's *Satiromastix* in the Belles Lettres Series (1913).

mingled elements taken from any and every source, combined homely realism with the immoderately romantic. He recalls Greene by the freshness of some of his scenes, and by his joy in life which endured through an existence prolonged in poverty from day to day, and even through the gloom of a debtors' prison. Like Greene, he excels at creating gentle, feeling women who are devoted and tender. He had, however, an advantage over Greene in that, when he began to write plays, English drama was no longer in a rudimentary state, but was completely constituted, fully organic and experienced. Even for his most loosely written improvisation, this progress was of service to Dekker.

Nothing is known of him, but it may be suspected that he sprang from the people of London and was irregularly educated. London was often his theme and the citizens were always his public. He wrote for the stage from 1597 onwards, at first as a subordinate. He was several times in prison, once for three years, from 1613 to 1616. From 1638 all trace of him is lost.

Ben Jonson's attacks give glimpses of him. In his person Jonson regarded him as a poor devil, down at heels and out at elbows, a jaundiced vagabond, and in his author's capacity as a "play-dresser and plagiary," a complete ignoramus without Greek or Latin, fatuous and jealous into the bargain, and willing to do anything for money. His representative on Jonson's stage is hired in order to insult Horace, who is Jonson himself. His foolish inventions are said to be growing apace like ill weeds. To this Dekker retorts by an amusing picture of the arrogant Horace-Jonson sweating in travail as he produces an ode and seeks for rhymes.

This poor ignorant wretch, this patcher and piercer, has, however, certain advantages over Jonson. More than he and as much as anyone else in this period, he has the gifts of grace and freshness. No burden of reading weighs him down. No habit of analysis cumbers him, and at his best he reproduces the animation of life very directly. He dramatises persons who live and awaken sympathy. On occasion, he has the lyrical gift; from time to time he sings a song which is winged, light and exquisite. While he hardly ever makes a unified and well-constructed play, while he has little logic and coherence and no philosophy whatsoever, he yet stands in this age for the dramatic poet who is so by instinct, who is of the people and artlessly romantic.

Impecunious as he was, he was all his life obliged to collaborate with anyone and everyone, with mediocre playwrights like Chettle, Haughton and Day, with the most famous of them all—Jonson himself, Middleton, Drayton and especially Webster—and later with Rowley, Ford and Massinger. He did not often have time to work as an artist and by himself. Only some eight or nine plays written by him alone are preserved and the merit of only four of these is eminent: *The Shoemakers Holiday* (1599), *Old Fortunatus* (1600) and the two parts of the *Honest Whore* (1604).

This child of London writes especially of London and for the cockney people. Others were, we know, painting very lively pictures of the city at the same time, but they worked in a satirical or derisory spirit. Jonson displays the vices and oddities of the town. Beaumont, in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* makes fun of the unsophisticated ignorance of the citizens and their romantic imagination. Middleton shows himself intimately acquainted with the deeds and ways of rogues and gallants. But Dekker is, with Thomas Heywood, almost alone in his sympathy for the world of the craftsmen and the ragtag and bobtail of the streets.

The constant quarrels between the companies of actors and the civic authorities must not give the impression that the mass of the citizens were hostile to the stage. The contrary is true of all save the still narrow circle of the devout. The city as a whole was stage-struck, to such a point that poets, laureates and dramatists had arisen to work specially for the citizens, pamper their tastes and vanity, and hold up on the stage a flattering mirror in which they saw their own embellished reflection. Dekker was one of their authors, but he had a natural love for the task which was to others a mere source of profit.

The powerful livery companies, proud of their wealth, numbers and origin, had, exactly like the nobility, both a semi-legendary history and historians. Deloney traced the glorious annals of the Drapers and the Shoemakers, beginning with the lives of their patron saints and ending with his own time. We have seen how spiritedly he combined realistic anecdotes and ancient tradition when he told the story of Simon Eyre, the glorious shoemaker of the reign of Henry VI., who from a mere apprentice became Lord Mayor, built the leather-market in

Leadenhall, and founded a holiday and banquet for the apprentices. Dekker dramatised Deloney's novel. He makes Simon Eyre his hero, takes us into his shop and introduces us to his wife and workpeople. Life in the workshop is not all a virtuous idyll, for Dame Margerie, Eyre's wife, is crabbed and vain, the workmen quarrel among themselves and even with their master, and while the foreman is steady and self-possessed, the second is a drunken wag and a mischievous scamp. But merriment and heartiness are dominant. Simon Eyre's own jovial temper makes him unique; his very insults sound cordial. His language is emphatic and nonsensical as Pistol's, for he has learnt long words in the playhouses without understanding them, and uses them constantly, perpetrating many malapropisms. Simon Eyre is always in a good temper, in magnificent health, and fond as an apprentice or a sheriff of eating and drinking. His good fortune fills him with joy, but neither bridles his tongue nor lessens his jollity. He always treats his men as brothers, drinks and jokes with them and in his own way loves them. He is the king of London apprentices, and celebrates his accession by raining cakes and ale upon them.

Only an open, slightly superficial nature could so overflow with cheerful merriment. Shakespeare was incapable of gaiety so unthinking; moral reflections, not without sadness, are cast on his Falstaff, who belongs to exactly the same year as Simon Eyre.

Dekker is always in the sun, always enjoying a trivial, easy-going cheerfulness. He does not trouble to explain Simon Eyre's rise, cares nothing for the real psychological problem. He does not drain his cup, but merely sips its froth.

He heightens the impression of facile happiness by the love-story of the principal plot. Lacy, nephew of the Earl of Lincoln, loves Rose, the Lord Mayor's daughter. Both earl and mayor oppose the match from pride of class. Lacy then deserts the regiment he commands, letting it go to fight in France without him, and disguised as a Flemish workman he works for Simon Eyre in order to be near his beloved. He ends, of course, by running away with her, and the father and uncle, after holding out for some time, are reconciled by the king.

Dekker's cheerfulness is everywhere, like an atmosphere about the play, like sunlight shed on gutter or dust-heap and

making joyous reflections. Even smutty words are bright in this gay light and gather no sinister suggestiveness in the shade. All men are good at heart, prone though they be to sin. Citizen Hammon courts Jane whose husband, Ralph, a journeyman shoemaker, has been pressed for the French war. He finds her in the seamstress's shop in which she is seeking to earn a livelihood until Ralph comes back. He yearns for her, plans to seduce her, and desires her the more for her resistance. He then repeats to her a false report, in which he seems himself to believe, of her husband's death. In her forlornness, she at last yields to his importunities, and the marriage is about to be celebrated when Ralph returns, limping from a wound, and learns what has happened. With the help of his brother shoemakers he stops the bridal procession, and his young wife then flies to his arms, preferring his poverty to all Hammon's money. For a moment Hammon does not acknowledge himself beaten, but attempts to buy Jane from Ralph. But he is, at bottom, a good fellow, and when Ralph is indignant he cedes both wife and money to him. Everyone in this play has a good heart.

A charming rose-coloured vein of feeling runs through it. It is perhaps more genuinely and virtuously merry than anything else in Renascence drama. Romantic and realistic elements are nowhere else so easily and prettily blended. A realism neither hard nor cynical combines well with a romanticism which is not extravagant, exactly as Dekker's very simple blank verse is happily allied to his picturesque prose. His sympathy with his humble folk brings them near to his great ones, so that characters are better unified than in other plays; class-barriers are broken down; the king's jovial good humour makes him one with his people, and the poorest are ennobled by their delicacy of feeling.

For Dekker is a true poet. Lamb could say of him that he "had poetry enough for anything." This poetry is more evident in a strange and unequal play which has many absurdities but includes some beautiful scenes, *Old Fortunatus*.

Dekker, a popular author who had not lost contact with the spirit of the Middle Ages, wrote a true morality-play on an old German legend already staged in England. Old Fortunatus is endowed by Fortune with an inexhaustible purse, which he has chosen to receive rather than wisdom, health, beauty or long life, and the gift of his choice brings him unhappiness. It causes his

death and also that of his two sons, of whom one is virtuous and the other vicious.

The son's adventures are woven of strange buffoonery. But the play opens grandly and poetically. Fortunatus, poor and old, has lost his way in a wood when the dazzling vision comes to him of Fortune with her train of crowned ragamuffins and enslaved kings, the ragamuffins singing her praises and the kings cursing her. With royal disdain Fortune replies to them, enumerating the marks of her power. Then she notices the poor old man and offers him any one of her gifts; but as she gives him the purse he craves she blames his unworthy choice, and warns him that he will "dwell with cares and quickly die." This first and completely lyrical scene, made of harmonious and clear verses, is one of the most poetic in the drama of the period.

The *Honest Whore* is Dekker's best-known work. In spite of some Elizabethan eccentricity and whimsicality, it might be called a domestic drama. The definition fits at least the principal plot, the secondary theme being a buffoonery about a patient husband, resigned as Griselda, whose improbable placidity is unmoved even by the most outrageous insults and affronts.

The adventures of Bellafront, the whore, are very different. Among the young cynics who are her habitual companions, she one day notices the young lord Hippolito, who is in great though silent grief because he believes the girl he loves to be dead. His friends have dragged him to Bellafront's house to distract his thoughts. The courtesan falls in love with this silent man, so different from the others, but he disdainfully rejects her advances, thinks that her sighs are so many baits to her traps and that her tears for her lost chastity are false. He tells her all the shamefulness of her trade. She is converted, denies herself to her lovers, endures poverty, and dismisses even Matheo, her first seducer, declaring that she can accept nothing but marriage from him. He rejects this demand with a sneer, but is finally compelled to grant it by the Duke of Milan.

The first part of the play ends with this rehabilitation of Bellafront. The second part has truth which is more poignant and of a rarer kind. Matheo, married against his will, is a debauchee and gamester who loses all the money of the household. Determined to "fly high," he has no regard for his wife, but robs her of everything, even her dress, which he sells that he

may gamble. He makes her live in a hovel of which all the furniture goes to the pawnbroker, steals in order to play again, urges his wife to resume her old trade and brings her customers. She, however, is now completely virtuous; not only does she resist her husband's infamous persuasions, stripping herself, the while, of everything for his sake, but she even repels the advances of Hippolito, who converted her and whom she loved. He is now married to the beautiful girl he once, in error, had mourned, but he seeks, nevertheless, to seduce Bellafront. His gold, his presents, his eloquence and his vaunting of the splendour of courtesans are, however, all in vain: in reply she recalls to him his sinister picture of women of ill-fame.

Unknown to her, her father, Orlando Friscobaldo, the most original character in the play, is beside her to sustain her. This old gentleman of strict morals has refused to see his daughter since her fall. She had been dead to him. Learning, however, that she is married and wishes to live virtuously, he enters her house disguised as a servant. While he feigns to be hot-tempered and brutal, he watches over her like a Providence. He first gives money to her husband, and then, finding him incorrigible and cruel to her, arranges his arrest for theft and thus has him at his mercy. When he has tamed him he forgives him, and offers his house and money to him and his wife. The struggle between Friscobaldo's sense of honour and his fatherly love is painted with extreme vigour and originality. Without analysis or soliloquies, the old man's vacillations are shown, the sudden alternations of his fury and his love, his unending care for his daughter and untiring devotion to her, hidden beneath his taunts and his apparently inflexible severity. He resolves himself to test the thoroughness of her conversion, and every time her virtue is proof against a new trial he is unable to contain his joy, and more than before allows his heart to guide him.

Friscobaldo is not merely interesting in himself. He is the first of a long line of characters who are probably dear to every public, but are especially so to the English. Nowhere else is gruff benevolence as much loved, whether in novels or on the stage, as in England. The English like to think it part of their national character, in contrast to the polite manners of southern nations which hide, as they think, a lack of virtue and cordiality. A good heart and a rough exterior make their ideal.

The Bohemian Dekker had really great gifts. He could impart poetry and life. His work, badly put together, may seem formless beside Jonson's. But Jonson's plays cannot match Dekker's cheerfulness, his true feeling, or the characters at once alive and attractive whom he created more than once, and of whom at least Simon Eyre and Friscobaldo deserve to be models. They are worthy to rank with Shakespeare's people, from whom, however, they are not copied. In the plays in which Dekker collaborated his poetry and tenderness recur. His handiwork can be recognised in the most pleasing passages of the *Witch of Edmonton,* which he wrote with Ford and Rowley, and of the *Virgin Martyr,* which he wrote with Massinger.

5. *Thomas Heywood (1575?-1650).*[1]—It is Thomas Heywood whose tenderness and pity bring him nearest to Dekker. Lamb called this pathetic author "a sort of prose Shakespeare." He was rather, perhaps, a prose Dekker, a Dekker shorn of lyricism, fancy and gaiety, able to create dramatic and moving situations rather than strongly individualised characters. Yet because he found it easier than Dekker to do without romance, he was, in some of his plays, more successful than the former in realising the ideal citizen drama.

Like Dekker, Heywood is closely connected with London, and the great body of his work constantly betrays his desire to minister to the tastes and even the vanities and prejudices of the citizens and their guilds. He was well educated, a Cambridge man. His knowledge was extensive and he was a very productive writer who attempted many literary forms and the most various subjects. As early as 1596 he was a resolute devotee of the stage, and, like Shakespeare, he was both an actor and a playwright. He was the most prolific of the Elizabethans. He claims to have been the chief author of two hundred and twenty plays of which only twenty-four have reached us. Of all English dramatists, he was the one who came nearest to the fertility of the Spaniards. Quantity is often reached at the expense of quality. This copious writer is an improviser never stayed by artistic considerations. At his best, he attains to clarity and fluency, and he desires no more.

[1] *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood,* reprint by Pearson, 6 vols. (1874); selected plays in the Mermaid Series, ed. Verity, 1 vol. (1888); *A Woman Killed with Kindness,* ed. Ward (1897), ed. Cox (1907); *The Captives,* ed. Judson (Yale University Press, 1921).

His subjects are extremely varied. He draws on English history, ready to flatter the simple and artless patriotism or the Protestantism of his public. He appeals to their sense of honour and of morality. The better to reach his ends, he usually confines himself to England, rejecting the fashion for the exotic which attracted writers to the south, and especially to Italy.

Among his plays intended to flatter the self-satisfaction of the Londoners, the most extravagant is unquestionably the *Four Prentices of London*, which was performed towards the end of the sixteenth century. More than any other play, it panders to the vanity of the citizens. Their reading of degenerate chivalrous romances so easily went to their heads, that there was hardly an apprentice among them who did not conceal a Don Quixote. Heywood represents four youths, sons of the expropriated Earl of Bulloigne (or Bouillon), who has taken refuge in London. They have been apprenticed to a mercer, a haberdasher, a goldsmith and a grocer, and do their duty well until their blood is stirred by an appeal in the streets for soldiers who will go to Jerusalem. They thereupon enrol themselves, and each of them subsequently encounters adventures extraordinary enough to dim the glory of Amadis. At last the brothers meet in Jerusalem. Each of them has won a crown, but Godfrey, out of humility, asks that his may be of thorns.

The adulation of the city is unbounded. Each exploit of any one of the apprentices is credited to his guild, which he never forgets. On his shield each bears the emblem of his trade. Heywood dedicated the printed edition of his play to "the Honest and High-Spirited Prentises," and said it was his good luck that its publication coincided with the rising of the trained bands. He was not the man to make fun of the doltish, bragging London militia.

There is the same flattery in his less romantic plays, for instance in the two parts of *King Edward the Fourth*, which show the siege of London and the defeat of the besiegers by the Lord Mayor and citizens. *If You Know Not Me, You Know No Body, or the Troubles of Queen Elizabeth*, celebrates the building of the Royal Exchange by Sir Thomas Gresham, and the *Faire Maid of the Exchange* gives a realistic picture of a part of the city and the shops which clustered about the Exchange. The hero of the latter play, the lame man Cripple, who is dis-

tinguished by his sincere love and his unselfishness, is a public scribe in humble circumstances. The *Faire Maid of the West* sounds a patriotic note in a wider atmosphere. Heywood celebrates in it the adventures of seafarers, and very vigorously reproduces life in the port of Plymouth at the time of the expedition of Essex to the Azores.

Already in these plays Heywood plainly shows his preference for dramas having a moral tendency and dealing with cockney life. *Edward the Fourth* tells the story of the king's love for Jane Shore, the goldsmith's wife, how he seduced her and raised her to grandeur, and how she fell and with her unhappy husband died in misery. There is, however, another series of plays which show Heywood's powers in their pure state, hardly adulterated by romanticism or by his historical ambitions. In them he continues a line of plays which began in 1587 with *Arden of Feversham* and which can, at intervals, be traced through works lost save for their titles, and through a few still extant.

This was a series of domestic dramas. One of the most striking contributions to it is the anonymous *Warning for Fair Women* which was published in 1599, and which dramatises an actual event, the murder of a London merchant, George Sanders, by his wife's lover, with her consent. It is a realistic representation of a crime of passion analogous to *Arden of Feversham*, and insists on the punishment and remorse of the guilty lovers. A dumb show precedes each act and indicates the relation of this play to the old moralities.

The *Yorkshire Tragedy*, which was published in 1608 as a work of Shakespeare's, has a more modern aspect. It is very short, and powerfully epitomises the crimes committed by a debauchee who has come home in a state of frenzy after losing all his fortune at play. He knows that his wife is ruined, that his children must be beggars, and in a fever he turns to indiscriminate slaughter. The play moves violently and furiously; the dialogue is breathless and spasmodic; the murderer is like one possessed. Beside himself with remorse for having rendered his wife destitute, he overwhelms her with ignoble insults and blames her for all their misfortunes. Yet we feel that he loves his children even as he strangles them. He is a madman impelled by a diabolic force who strikes right and left—wife, children and servants. Arrested and placed in the presence of the wife he has

wounded, he recovers his senses. Literally, he feels that a devil has gone out of him, and liberated, exorcised and repentant, he goes out to his punishment.

These are such realistic plays as convict sinners among an audience and compel them to confession. They are the most moral and, in one sense, the most classical contribution of the Elizabethans to drama. They respect the essential unity, that of subject. They go straight to the point, rapidly and luminously. Nothing else is so unencumbered, has a gait so unaffected, reaches its conclusions so unmistakably.

Heywood's finest and most characteristic work belongs to this school of domestic drama, but in his gentler vein he avoids crime, and does not present adultery save as a tragedy which inflicts suffering and provokes remorse. He abstains from bloodshed unless a well-known theme constrains him to it, for instance that of *The Rape of Lucrece* printed in 1609. This is an unequal play which very forcefully depicts the terror in Lucretia's house after her rape.

His masterpiece is *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, performed in 1603. Nothing in Elizabethan drama is simpler in matter and form, or more moving than this play. It has indeed two distinct and badly connected plots, but only one of them, that which names it, is important.

A happy and virtuous married couple, whose felicity communicates itself to the audience, are first presented. But their home is ruined by the generosity of the husband, Master Frankeford, who gives shelter to a poor gentleman named Wendoll, and bestows his confidence on him. Wendoll conceives a fatal love for Frankeford's wife, and although he is aware of the vileness of his passion, he struggles against it in vain. When, during Frankeford's absence, he is left alone with his hostess, he avows his feelings, and the young woman, who is at first horrified and stupefied, is presently under the sway of his passion, able to overcome gratitude and honour. She wavers, then succumbs: it is as though she were seized by sudden giddiness and could not do otherwise than fall. A faithful servant informs the master of the house of what has happened. At first he is incredulous, tries to banish his suspicions, plays at cards with his friend and his wife. But, strive against it as he may, he finds himself twisting everything they say and reading double meanings into all

their words. Feeling that he must have certainty, he alleges that he is obliged to make a journey, and starts at night, in spite of the protests of his wife, who would stop his going, and of his friend, who offers to accompany and protect him. He returns suddenly to find the guilty couple in each other's arms. Nothing is more poignant than this return:

> Astonishment,
> Feare and amazement beat upon my heart,
> Even as a madman beats upon a drum,

he says, as he approaches the room where the lovers are asleep, and when he reappears, after witnessing their guilt, he is as much ravaged by emotion as Macbeth issuing from Duncan's chamber. Yet he has not killed them, for he will not send two precious souls to hell. With withering contempt he turns his false friend out of his house, and when his wife, on her knees, weeps and implores for mercy, he forces her to acknowledge the enormity of her fault and shows her their two children:

> On whose white brows thy shame is charactered.

He then pronounces her sentence. He will punish her only with kindness. She must retire, with all her possessions, leaving nothing behind her, to a manor he gives up to her. She shall have money and servants, but she must never attempt to see him or her children again nor ever write to him. She has died to him.

She goes, forgetting the lute on which she has been wont to play, accompanying her own voice in delightful songs. He sends it after her, and his messenger overtakes her on the road, plunged in grief. Wendoll, hidden there, is the unseen witness of her unhappiness for which he is responsible. She asks the messenger to tell her husband that he has found her in tears, longing for death, and that she has sworn neither to eat nor drink. The lute is, by her order, broken against the coach-wheels:

> As the last music that I e'er shall make.

When Wendoll comes out of his hiding-place to speak to her, she screams in terror. Her lover has become for her a demon from whom she flees in horror, and Wendoll feels himself a Cain, a wanderer on the face of the earth.

Mistress Frankeford is next discovered in her place of exile and resigned to death. Her sole remaining desire is to see her

husband before her life ends, and he has pity on her, reaches her in her last moments, and solemnly grants her his pardon sealed by a kiss.

Moral loftiness and poignant melancholy impregnate this play. The unfaithful wife who is torn by remorse in the very act of sinning has nothing in common with Alice, the murderess of Feversham. Wendoll, save for a final, regrettable and superfluous touch, is entirely other than the vile Mosbie. If Heywood makes his heroine fall with a suddenness which is improbable, he succeeds in conveying the fearful fascination of passion. Above all, he depicts, with a humane sympathy then exceptional, the wife's remorse and the pity of the husband, whose love subsists although his moral dignity allows him no base compromise. Customs have so changed that his kindness may to-day seem like pitiless severity. But Frankeford was Othello's contemporary; the stage he walked was that on which terrible vengeances, after the Italians, were frequent. When his time and the circumstances in which he was created are taken into account, he is seen to breathe a singular gentleness which was victorious over violent and ferocious instincts.

Nearly thirty years later, Heywood returned to the theme of pity and pardon in a less celebrated and less pathetic play, but one which is perhaps more modern and which shows great delicacy of feeling, the *English Traveller*, printed in 1633. The hero, young Geraldine, is certainly among those who won for Heywood the praise that "his gentlemen are the most refined and finished of gentlemen." He is a candid youth who does not know that Platonic love may be dangerous to himself and others, and who suspects no treachery in the woman he loves or in his friend. He is in love with a girl who reciprocates his feeling, but on returning from a long journey on the Continent he finds her the wife of Wincott, an old gentleman. Wincott makes friends with him and encourages his visits. Geraldine and Mistress Wincott confess to each other that their love subsists, yet do not fail in their duty, but agree to unite after Wincott's death. Meanwhile, however, Geraldine introduces to the Wincotts' house his friend Dalavill, who wins Mistress Wincott's love while he pretends that he is courting her sister. He becomes her lover and together with her mocks Geraldine's coldness. When an accident reveals to Geraldine that he has been doubly betrayed,

his first thought is to kill the guilty pair, but he recoils from bloodshed and will not send them to damnation. He decides on another journey, and when Mistress Wincott, out of prudence, feigns regret at his departure, and reminds him of their vows, he tells her what he knows and blasts her with his contempt. Her eyes are thus opened to the enormity of her crime. She dismisses her lover in horror and dies suddenly, leaving behind her a letter in which she acknowledges her fault and declares her admiration for the man whose moral greatness has saved her soul by causing her to feel remorse.

These plays are the most characteristic and the finest productions of a playwright whose work is rich, diversified and extremely unequal, but who has created, here and there, some strong and simple situations appealing to feelings shared by us all. Amid the violence and ferocity habitual to the stage of the time, these scenes are restful. Heywood had a sure guide in his moral sense, which was so informed by pity that it had nothing in common with the rigidity of extreme Puritanism, and which holds good for all countries and all ages.

6. *Thomas Middleton (1570?-1627).*—Thomas Middleton,[1] chronologer of the city and more than once in charge of civic masques and pageants, had as strong ties with London as Dekker and Heywood, and depicted, as they did, the life of the town. Instead, however, of flattering the citizens, he was diverted by them. It pleased him to show up their foibles and their vices. He thus connects with the Jonson who wrote *The Alchemist, The Silent Woman* and *Bartholomew Fair*, with the difference that he seems less anxious than Jonson to point a moral. He has a taste for cynical pictures and a natural tendency towards the most licentious implications, although as a rule he abstains from the more brutal obscenity of such as Marston.

Hardly anything is known of him save that Jonson considered him "a base fellow," whether as a man or as a writer does not appear. In 1604 he wrote some satirical tales of low life in London, after the manner of Greene and Nashe. They form a parallel to Dekker's efforts in the same direction, and are entitled

[1] *The Works of Thomas Middleton*, ed. Bullen, 8 vols. (1885-6); selected plays, ed. by Havelock Ellis with preface by Swinburne, 2 vols. (Mermaid Series, 1890); *The Spanish Gipsy* and *All's Lost by Lust*, ed. Morris (Belles Lettres Series, 1907); *A New Wonder, a Woman Never Vexed*, Hazlitt's Dodsley, vol. xii.; *A Match at Midnight*, ibid., vol. xiii.

the *Black Book* and *Father Hubbard's Tale.* Incisive, picturesque and moving rapidly, they show a very complete acquaintance with the disreputable society in which the scene of the author's comedies was also laid. The *Black Book* is the more cynical of the two collections, the other being more poetic, its mood softened by a pity for the weak and poor of the world which recalls Dekker.

(*a*) MIDDLETON'S COMEDIES.—Middleton tried several paths before he found his right one, attempting romantic plays like *Blurt, Master Constable,* very strongly influenced by Shakespeare, and pseudo-historical plays, for instance the *Mayor of Queenborough* which deals with the Saxon invasion. He collaborated with several authors, principally Dekker, and finally he found his vocation in light comedy. He himself alludes, in a prefatory address to the readers of *The Roaring Girle,* to a change in the public taste analogous to that which affected dress. "Now, in the time of spruceness, our plays follow the niceness of our garments." It is not certain that the general taste had changed as much as Middleton asserts, but what he says doubtless applies to the special public for which he wrote, "the termers," gay young sparks who flocked to town in the autumn. He might have been the purveyor of some London Palais Royal theatre of the reign of James I.

He produced from 1604 to 1612 a series of highly flavoured farcical comedies, distinguished by the vivacity of their scenes, their skilful construction and the very direct acquaintance they show with the least desirable circles of London society. The best of them are *Michaelmas Term* (1604), *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1606?), *A Mad World, My Masters* (1606), *Your Five Gallants* (1606) and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1612).

The first of these, *Michaelmas Term,* is in its own genre not far removed from a masterpiece. Its spirit is that of the *Conny-Catching Tracts.* It shows a young man from the country drawn into a life of pleasure, induced by sharpers to gamble and spend money and brought by need of cash into the clutches of a usurer who finally seizes his estate. Quomodo, the usurer, is a draper, and has two attendants who help him to ensnare Easy, the dupe. A forerunner of Harpagon, he dispenses no money, but sells his cloth to poor Easy, who cannot get rid of it except at a third

of the price he gave for it, to a purchaser who conceals Quomodo himself. Easy cannot honour the bond he has signed and has to pledge his property. This theme is treated by Middleton with all possible accuracy. Save that the scoundrels are too prone to assume disguises, nothing could be more natural than the cheating scenes. Poor Easy, who is not foolish but merely unsophisticated, meets disaster by a mathematical necessity; his ruin is inevitably deduced. Shakespeare himself was not more skilful when he showed how Iago duped Othello. In the borrowing scene, long as it is, there is not a detail which does not tell, and the basis is a very sure and very accurate psychology. The genre is not elevated, but, such as it is, it reaches perfection in this play.

All Middleton's other comedies are worth analysing. They include examples of complete cynicism like *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, a merry farce in Regnard's manner, in which Middleton claims sympathy for an extravagant nephew who makes his rapacious uncle his dupe. In *A Mad World, My Masters*, a bully plays abominable tricks on his grandfather, whose heir he is, but who will give him nothing. In the end the laugh turns against the grandson, who becomes the victim of his own misdeeds. Sometimes Middleton recalls the moralities, for instance in *Your Five Gallants*, which passes swindlers and ruffians in review, finally meting out due chastisement to them. The five types represented are "the broker gallant," "the bawd gallant," "the cheating gallant," "the pocket gallant" and "the whore gallant." At other times this playwright produces a real merry, nimble farce like *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, which is wholly laughter-provoking and which very skilfully interweaves several plots, each more ribald than the one before. Its matter is the adventures of several households, and the action leads at a furious pace to a comic conclusion: a barren and an over-prolific couple, a triangle in which the complacent husband enjoys his ease at the expense of a dissipated spendthrift, and a pedantic simpleton of a student who ends by marrying a red-haired Welshwoman of slight virtue. These situations lead to wildly farcical incidents, through which runs the course of the true love of yet another couple who succeed in getting married in spite of their parents. When we read this comedy we have to acknowledge that no writer of vaudeville at the present day has more skill or

adroitness than Middleton, the most modern of the humorists of the Renascence.

To all his comedies, including the last, his observation of realities gives substance. He paints the manners of his time. In *A Chaste Maid* there is a scene which sketches a christening-party from the life. We meet at this junketing all the gossips of the neighbourhood, and certain Puritans who find most pious pretexts for drinking deep. One character in *A Mad World* is more than farcical, a true portrait, probably drawn from life—Sir Bounteous Progress, a grandfather and rich old knight who practises in his country house the most liberal hospitality. He has an artless respect for titles, and is never happier than when he shelters or believes he shelters a lord beneath his roof. At the same time he is cheerful and sociable, addicted to the pleasures of the table and still a follower of women. He entertains at great expense a London courtesan who deceives him barefacedly. He no sooner learns that she has taken to her bed than he concludes that she is about to bear him a son, and is beside himself with pride at the vitality he still retains. This little spare old man in his long doublet is full of go and optimism. The play subjects him to trial after trial, but his good humour is never defeated. Were he not so void of sentimentality, he might be one of Dekker's characters.

Middleton, however, was not so complete a realist as to have no share of Elizabethan fancifulness. Even Quomodo, the crafty usurer of *Michaelmas Term*, has in his composition a grain of pleasant imagination, almost of poetry. He is genuinely carried away by the thought of the property out of which he cheats poor Easy. He sees himself riding thither with his wife and children, harvests his crops in imagination. For all his rapacity, he has a quite idyllic vision of felicity and a heart which melts like that of any worthy citizen and good father. It is true that when once this fancifulness is let loose it outruns all bounds. Quomodo, wishing to know how his son Sim will behave as owner of the land gained by his father's craft, and how Thomasine, his wife, will weep when he is no more, feigns to grow ill and die. He has cause to rue his device, for Thomasine's pity for her husband's poor dupe has turned to love, and she immediately marries Easy, reveals to him the treachery which has victimised

him, and helps him to recover his property. Quomodo reappears to find that he has lost everything, his wife as well as his money.

The initial realism has given place to whimsicality. Thus even Middleton's realistic comedies sometimes depart momentarily from the probable, and the imaginative among his audiences are grateful for not being constantly tied to the dull earth.

(b) THE TRAGEDY MIDDLETON WROTE ALONE.—His comedies are only half Middleton's work. It is strange to see him [illegible] om the kind of work which [illegible] tragedy. To-day opinion [illegible] tragedy which he wrote without a collaborator: *Women Beware Women.* It dramatises the true adventures of an Italian courtesan, Bianca Cappello (1542-87), and may have been suggested by the success recently encountered by *The White Devil,* a play on the life of another Italian courtesan, Vittoria Accorombona, written by Webster, with whom Middleton seems to have been on terms of friendship. Vice and crime are portrayed with equal horror in the two tragedies, but there is a striking contrast between the melodramatic genius of Webster and the realistic genius of Middleton, who seems instinctively to have brought his sinister subject as near everyday life as possible.

The beginning of his play is truly admirable. It is pervaded by a gentle atmosphere of honest worth and love, so that the subsequent abominations are proportionately thrown into relief. Leontio, a young factor, brings home to his poor dwelling in Florence his Venetian bride, who is both marvellously beautiful and nobly born. It has been a love-match, and Bianca accepts her humble lot cheerfully. Leontio's mother, when once she has scolded her son for having kept his marriage secret, receives his young wife affectionately. But Leontio is obliged to leave home almost immediately. He is discovered in the street hesitating between love which holds him back and duty which drives him forward. Bianca, at her window, calls him with looks and voice, but as he is about to yield to her he summons all his courage and departs with a last farewell. Bianca, on her balcony, weeps while her mother-in-law mildly reproaches her. Leontio has hardly gone when the street fills with townsfolk, apprentices and merry urchins, assembled because the duke is about to pass.

It is the day on which the duke and his nobles ceremoniously visit St. Mark's. The magnificent procession passes beneath the windows of the two women.

"Did not the duke look up? Methought he saw us," says Bianca, and the scene ends on this uneasy note. First the old mother and then the young wife are afterwards ensnared by a great lady, Livia, who acts as procuress to the self-indulgent duke. A very remarkably contrived scene, which has a powerful theatrical effect, shows Livia and the old woman playing chess in the foreground, while in the background Bianca is thrown into the arms of the duke, whose promises turn her head and whose power terrifies her so that, although she protests desperately, he finally overcomes her resistance, as much by force as by persuasion. When she is seen again, after she has lost her virtue, the tumult of her soul is such that, while she withers the procuress with scorn, she declares herself ready to accept her dishonour, since she has nothing left to do but to be shameless to the end. Her decision taken, she is feverishly gay, resolved to be what guile and treason have made her.

The return of the trustful Leontio is very pathetic. He arrives joyfully, descanting like a poet on the honourable happiness which marriage has brought him. He is stupefied by the coldness and hostility with which Bianca receives him, and in despair when he understands the truth. The scene ends with a sad soliloquy which balances the opening pæan of joy and in which Leontio envies the peace of the unmarried.

The remainder of the tragedy recounts the crimes by which Bianca and the duke attain to marriage, to die soon afterwards in the moment of their triumph. Another and parallel plot is concerned with the incest of an uncle and niece, also directed by Livia, who is a corrupter of good women and responsible for the title of the play. The end, a general massacre on the occasion of a masquerade, is linked up with the inventions which figure in the *Spanish Tragedie*, and gives Middleton's tragedy a place in a known series. Its first part is, none the less, original and poignant.

(*c*) The Tragedies Which Middleton Wrote With Rowley.—Middleton's other tragedies or tragi-comedies were all written in collaboration with William Rowley (1585?-1642?), his junior by about ten years. Rowley, an author-actor like

Shakespeare, wrote almost always in collaboration, so that his own talent is difficult to distinguish. He left, however, of his unaided work, one tragedy, *All's Lost by Lust* (1619), and two comedies, *A Match at Midnight* (1623) and *A New Wonder, a Woman Never Vexed* (1631), whence it may be concluded that his literary culture was mediocre and his versification irregular and rhythmically defective, but that he had experience of the theatre and a sense of tragic and comic stage-effects which made a wide appeal. Middleton, an expert in comic dialogue, gives in his one tragedy too much space to lyrical soliloquies and tirades. Rowley's influence is presumably accountable for the more lively dialogue of the later plays and also, doubtless, for the unfortunately numerous farcical effects in such parts of them as are comedy. But it is impossible to do more than conjecture the contribution of either playwright to these undivided plays which they both signed—Middleton's name always preceding Rowley's. The chief of their joint productions are *A Fair Quarrel* (1616), *The Changeling* (1621), and the *Spanish Gipsy* (1623). All three are, for different reasons, among the most interesting of the dramatic works of the Jacobean period.

A Fair Quarrel has two plots, but the principal one, which names it, is reminiscent of *Hamlet*; it is a *Hamlet* transposed to a lower rank of society. Young Captain Ager is, in the course of a quarrel, called the son of a whore by his colonel, a brave but violent-tempered man whom he has greatly admired. He is angry on behalf of his mother and a duel seems inevitable, but Ager cannot fight save in a just cause Cautiously and in fear and trembling, he sounds his mother, who is indignant that her son should doubt her and strikes him. Exulting in her anger, he then tells her that she has filled him with joy and that he will now fight the man who has insulted her. She, horrified and imagining him dead already, thereupon retracts and declares herself guilty. With death in his heart Ager then declines the duel, and apologises to his adversary, who calls him a coward. The new and undeserved insult restores his spirit and gives him the right to fight. He wounds his colonel, who, believing himself at the point of death, acknowledges that he has been in the wrong and withdraws the insult to the young man's mother, confessing that he uttered it in a moment of temper.

Although Lady Ager's change of attitude is very sudden, the

scene between her and her son is really dramatic, its course guided by a very sure hand.

The plot of the *Spanish Gipsy,* a more fantastic and less serious tragi-comedy, is much more complicated. The self-styled gipsy is a great Spanish nobleman who is obliged, after killing another nobleman in a duel, to flee his country. He returns thither with his wife, children and some followers, all disguised as gipsies, idyllic gipsies who constitute a free society, having its own laws and customs. From this utopian gipsy state all vice is banished: no man cheats or steals or is dissipated. Otherwise these are like true gipsies, who tell fortunes, sing, even act plays. Many suitors are attracted by the beauty of the chief's daughter, Pretiosa. The spirit of the pastoral reigns in this part of the play.

The tragedy is found in another plot which has some really moving scenes. Young Roderigo, son of the corregidor of Madrid, abducts a pretty girl, with the help of his friends, one night when he is heated with wine, takes her to his room and violates her. At dawn on the morrow, the victim—Clara, daughter of Don Pedro—is horrified when she awakes in the place of the crime, in unknown surroundings. She perceives through the window a large garden with an alabaster fountain in its centre. She returns home, determined to discover her seducer, and refuses to marry a young man she loves because she can contemplate no reparation except marriage with her ravisher. Long afterwards she is hurt in a street accident and carried to a neighbouring house. When she recovers consciousness, she finds herself again in the scene of the crime. Her father, who is tending her, looks through the window, at her request, and describes to her the beautiful garden she has seen already with its alabaster fountain. Thus recognition is accomplished, and the heroine finally marries her ravisher, who ever since the fatal night has been consumed by remorse and has wished to repair his wrong to her. These incidents might be melodramatic, but Middleton's habitual realism gives them a striking air of truth.

Incontestably, however, the masterpiece of the collaboration of Middleton and Rowley is *The Changeling,* which would rank with the Shakespearean tragedies were it not disfigured by a coarse and worthless secondary plot, without connection with the principal story.

The hand of the youthful Beatrice, daughter to the governor of the castle of Alicante, is officially granted to the Lord Alonso. But the Lord Alsemero supervenes and falls in love with Beatrice, believing her free. She returns his love and they exchange vows. This opening of the play moves swiftly and is charming. Beatrice vainly implores for a postponement of the marriage her father has arranged for her. He attributes her averseness to childishness, maidenly shrinking, and it seems inevitable. In the governor's suite there is, however, a poor gentleman named De Flores, an adventurer whose dark, pustulous and terrifying countenance bespeaks his vice. He has long hovered persistently and obsequiously about Beatrice, impelled by a love at once servile and audacious, mean and forceful. She has repelled him with sarcasm and insults. She feels for him invincible loathing, as for a reptile, combined with secret horror, but he refuses to be discouraged and is ready to do anything to win a smile from her.

Since no coldness from Beatrice discourages Alonso, Alsemero conceives the idea of preventing his marriage with Beatrice by provoking him to a duel. But Beatrice, trembling for the life of the man she loves, determines that De Flores, who will do her bidding at a word, shall save her. She therefore flatters him and gives him to understand that she wishes Alonso to disappear. She plans to pay her tool with much gold which will enable him to escape after the murder, but he, the while, has no prize in view save herself.

The crime is accomplished, and De Flores returns to Beatrice to claim not the reward she intends, but that which he desires. He rejects her proffered gold although she doubles and trebles its sum. Their shared crime puts her in his power, and finally, like a hawk with its prey, he carries her off with him:

'Las! how the turtle pants!

These incomparable scenes are followed by others which are unfortunately inferior, some of them extremely licentious. They show that De Flores remains true to himself. Beatrice does indeed marry Alsemero, for whose sake she has become a murderess and as a consequence has lost her purity. But the mark of De Flores is upon her. His intrepidity inspires her with unwilling admiration. Alsemero, when he comes to know of the

murder, repudiates his young wife in horror, showing how different is his love from that of De Flores, which no scruple can shake. The two accomplices are arrested, but, rather than fall into the hands of Justice alive, De Flores stabs first Beatrice and then himself:

> Yes, and her honour's prize
> Was my reward; I thank life for nothing
> But that pleasure; it was so sweet to me,
> That I have drunk up all, left none behind
> For any man to pledge me.

These terrible adventures are recounted and these criminal passions and horrifying characters are drawn restrainedly, briefly, rapidly and dramatically, but not oratorically. There is no regularity in the breathless, disjointed verse, but it is nervous and full of movement.

(*d*) MIDDLETON'S LAST PLAYS.—Yet other plays, famous for different reasons, were written by Middleton by himself: *The Witch* (before 1622) and *A Game at Chess* (1624).

The Witch owes its renown less to its own merit than to its resemblance to *Macbeth*. When, in 1623, *Macbeth* was first published, it seems to have included several passages borrowed from *The Witch* by actors desirous of rejuvenating a play then already old. But Middleton had taken much more from Shakespeare than he gave to him. His witches descend from Macbeth's weird sisters, although they are almost comically realistic. They belong to a play founded on a legend of Alboin, king of the Lombards, properly a story of atrocities, but one which is not here treated seriously.

A Game at Chess is a curious political allegory directed against Spain. Because of its allusions it was astonishingly successful. No other play in Renascence drama was as profitable. The subject is the attempt of Spain, ultimately directed by Ignatius Loyola, to lay hands on England. Played immediately after the rupture of the negotiations for the Spanish match, the projected marriage between Prince Charles and an Infanta of Spain, it assigns a shady part to the Spanish ambassador, and the playwright was obliged to go into hiding in order to escape the consequences of his daring. The value of the play is mainly topical, but it is also no less ingenious than audacious. The char-

acters are the chessmen, the white pieces being the English and the black the Spaniards. Middleton's skill, already frequently demonstrated on the stage, is again made manifest.

It is only because he had no high ambition that he is not in the first rank of writers. Although not without literary conscience, he had neither Fletcher's poetry nor the artistic scrupulosity of Webster. Nor had he the humanity of Heywood and Dekker. The tone of his tragedies, as of his comedies, is generally hard and dry. But in his power to convey the impression of reality he surpasses them all. While he is far from excluding the romantic from his work, his distinction is that he can make the strangest incidents familiar. The moral intention of his plays, especially of his comedies, often suffers by unclean double meanings and implications. Yet it exists: he is indubitably a satirist and to flatter vice is not his habit. His villains are usually punished as they deserve, and as a rule he neither disturbs nor goes counter to the conception of justice. However much it may be necessary to qualify praise of Middleton's considerable body of work, he remains a definitely original member of the great company of the dramatists of his time, whether we consider his comedies, in which he excels by his amused observation of contemporary rascality, or his tragedies, in which even improbable situations are convincing because he could impart an appearance of truth. Middleton neither gave sympathy freely nor could attract it in any great degree. But his work is nervous and dexterous and moves swiftly.

7. *Cyril Tourneur (1575?-1626).*[1]—Two men of whom we know nothing, Tourneur and Webster, put new life into melodrama at a time when, towards the end of his career, Shakespeare was abandoning tragic for romantic plays.

Cyril Tourneur, who published some mediocre poems, left behind him two sombre tragedies, *The Revenger's Tragedy,* printed in 1607, and *The Atheist's Tragedy,* in 1611.

The first and by far the most powerful of these is like a gloomy morality-play in an Italian dress. In an unspecified town in Italy, having a court at which debauchery and cruelty reign, there are an infamous duke and duchess and their appropriately

[1] Plays and poems ed. Churton Collins, 2 vols. (1873); plays of Webster and Tourneur ed. Symonds in the Mermaid Series, 1 vol. (1888).

named offspring—Lussurioso, their son, Spurio, the duke's bastard, and Ambitiosio and Supervacuo, the duchess's sons by a former marriage.

Vindice, or the Avenger, whose betrothed the duke has first tried vainly to seduce and then poisoned, takes it upon him to punish this monstrous family. Punishment is his function, as it was that of the young Hamlet, to whom he owes more than one characteristic. He enters the service of Lussurioso, of course in disguise, and is commissioned by him to corrupt his own sister, Castiza. Desiring to test her, he fulfils his charge. Castiza resists, but her mother proves corruptible and attempts to bend her will in a really tragic scene in which the girl's horror is painted with singular force. She cannot believe that it is her mother who would persuade her to sin:

> Mother, come from that poisonous woman there.

No less impressive is the scene in which Vindice and his brother Hippolito, dagger in hand, drag their mother along by the shoulders and, under threat of death, force her to retract, show her the ignominy of her own conduct, and oblige her to reconsider and reform. Castiza enters at this moment and pretends that her mother's arguments have convinced her so that she is ready to yield to the duke's son, and the mother, in her better mind, is horrified to contemplate what she has done.

Here Tourneur, showing a son who by violence obliges his mother to recognise her fault, is manifestly in debt to *Hamlet*. Yet while he imitates he retains his independence. In his play the situation is blindingly clear; Vindice never doubts his task. As in a morality-play, there are only two colours—black and white. The effect on the spectator is immediate and irresistible. Nothing here is "sicklied over with the pale cast of thought." No play of the period reaches greater dramatic intensity more clearly and swiftly.

In his *Atheist's Tragedy* Tourneur attempts to draw a character, but lacks the necessary originality. D'Amville, his atheist, is too reminiscent of Marlowe's Machiavellian monsters, and the play is very inferior to its predecessor. Yet both are set in an atmosphere of crime and vice which certainly influenced the more poetic plays of Webster.

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8. *John Webster (1575?-1624?).*[1]—Of all the Elizabethans, it is John Webster who, after long oblivion, was most belauded by the Romantics. About the man it has been possible to discover hardly anything. He was born between 1570 and 1580 and he disappeared in 1624. He wrote for the stage from 1602 onwards, serving for five years a sort of apprenticeship as collaborator with Heywood, Middleton, Marston and, especially, Dekker, but his part, doubtless a subordinate one, in the works to which he contributed cannot be distinguished. His two masterpieces were produced between 1611 and 1614. He relapsed after them to mediocrity, and of his later work only his Roman play, *Appius and Virginia*, which dates from about 1620, has some merit. His authorship of it is to-day disputed, certain critics assigning it to Heywood.

He survives as the author of *The White Devil or Vittoria Corombona*, played about 1611, and the *Duchess of Malfi*, about 1614. These tragedies are enough to prove his talent.

The first is one of a series of studies of courtesans which appeared one after another within a few years. It seems to have been Marston who broke the ice with his *Dutch Courtesan*, which the feeling Dekker answered by appealing for pity for his Bellafront. Shakespeare's Cleopatra was an entirely original variation on the same theme. But Evadne, in *The Maid's Tragedy* by Beaumont and Fletcher, Bianca, in Middleton's *Women Beware Women*, and Webster's Vittoria are closely analogous and all appeared round about 1611. Webster's and Middleton's plays are pendants to each other with their atrocities, their Italian atmosphere, and the equally brilliant and criminal careers of the historic courtesans they portray, Bianca Cappello and Vittoria Accorombona.

From the beginning, the English dramatic Muse was apt to sojourn in Italy. Shakespeare early transferred himself thither in imagination, in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet*. But not until the seventeenth century did Italy become the conventional site of stage-representations of unbridled passion and gloomy atrocity. The novel,

[1] Dramatic works ed. Dyce, 4 vols. (1830); ed. W Hazlitt, 4 vols. (1857); plays of Webster and Tourneur ed. Symonds in the Mermaid Series, 1 vol (1888).
For studies of Webster see E. Gosse, *Seventeenth Century Studies* (1883); E. Stoll, *John Webster, the Periods of His Work* (1905); Rupert Brooke, *John Webster and the Elizabethan Drama* (London, 1916).

led by Nashe, was in this ahead of the stage. Marston with *Antonio and Mellida, The Malcontent* and *The Fawn,* Shakespeare with *Othello,* Jonson with *Volpone,* and Tourneur with *The Revenger's Tragedy,* accustomed their public to see Italy as the natural home of voluptuous pleasure, bloodshed and death. None, however, Italianised their scenes more exclusively and intensively than Webster. He specialised in Italy at a time when Fletcher and his collaborators were beginning to turn their attention to Spanish heroism.

Webster's genius is seen in *The White Devil,* especially in his portrait of Vittoria, the courtesan, whose licence scandalised Rome at the end of the sixteenth century. It is she who is the white devil. He makes her guilt clear, but at the same time conveys an impression of her fascination which he seems himself to feel. He is all admiration for this woman's beauty, the energy of her ambition and the presence of mind with which she faces desperate situations. As the wife of a poor gentleman, she is courted by Brachiano, Duke of Padua, and she convinces him that he must marry her, first ridding her of her husband and himself of his virtuous wife. The double murder is accomplished, but suspicion rests on those who profit by it. Vittoria is summoned before an imposing court, over which the Duke of Florence and his brother, Cardinal Monticelso, afterwards Sixtus V., preside. Accusations, both accurate and damning, are heaped upon her, but she meets her judges superbly, and with head held high turns their attack against them, reducing their proofs to nothingness and causing more than one of those present to waver. This scene on a large scale is admirable. Vittoria is none the less condemned to seclusion in a house of convertites, but escapes from it with her lover's help. They are pursued by the vengeance of the Duke of Florence and killed one after the other, Vittoria holding out until she has exhausted every resource of invention, cunning and courage. Even in her last hour she defends herself haughtily and, counting on the effect of her beauty, bares her bosom and walks to meet her assassins. She dies at last, confronting Fate with her last words:

> My soul, like to a ship in a black storm,
> Is driven, I know not whither.

Beside her is her brother Flamineo, her tool who has

debauched her to advance his fortunes and whom she uses for her love-affairs. It is he who causes her unwanted husband to disappear. He is vice incarnate, but his intrepidity in ill-doing, his lucid intelligence and his moments of real valour make him, abject as he is, not altogether mean.

These characters are placed among many others and meet with singularly atrocious adventures. The melodramatic expedients, increasingly employed in every succeeding scene, are endless: Brachiano's wife dies because her husband's portrait, which she has the habit of kissing every evening, is poisoned; a magician causes Brachiano to witness the execution of the double crime he has ordered; the sister who has been slain appears unmistakably to the brother who mourns her and will avenge her; Brachiano's murder is accomplished by pouring poison into a helmet afterwards riveted on to his head by an armourer, and he dies in atrocious pain while his enemies, disguised as Capuchins, reveal themselves to him in his last moments, telling the tale of his crimes and promising him damnation. The play is, moreover, spectacularly gorgeous: while the Conclave is in session, servants are shown passing backwards and forwards, carrying dishes for the imprisoned cardinals; afterwards the election takes place, and the new pope appears in great ceremony, uttering Latin formulas. Never has there been a more perfect fusion of pure drama, which is an effect of representing character and passions, and melodrama, which is based on the horror of physical impressions and on spectacular strangeness.

The *Duchess of Malfi*, a more closely knit play, makes the same appeal. The theme is persecuted virtue, a variant on the so popular one of revenge. There is again a question of vengeance, accomplished, as in the *Spanish Tragedie,* by strange means. The avengers are, however, moved by considerations due to their shortness of vision, as, for instance, fury at a misalliance, or they have low motives, like the desire to get possession of their victim's fortune. The victim, the Duchess of Malfi (or Amalfi), is all goodness and innocence, and is driven to madness and death by her brothers because she has secretly married her steward, the virtuous Antonio.

The tragedy is full of Shakespearean reminiscences: the duchess recalls Desdemona, and Cariola, her woman, Emilia in *Othello.* Bosola, the monster, the tool of the two brothers, is

modelled on Iago. The anger of Ferdinand, the criminal brother, against Bosola, after the murder he himself has ordered, is like that of King John against Hubert when he believes him to have put Arthur to death. The remorse of the other brother, the cardinal who can no longer pray, is a parallel to that of Claudius in *Hamlet*. Every such comparison would merely show up Webster's extreme inferiority, were it not that he substitutes for the psychology, at which Shakespeare principally aims, a search for the pathos inherent in situations and even in material effects. It is this search which is proper to melodrama. Webster has a strange power of evoking shudders. His means are sometimes the more effective for their simplicity. The duchess, compelled by fear of her brothers to keep her marriage secret, is discovered in her chamber conversing with her husband, Antonio, her heart filled with joy and love. Antonio leaves her without her knowledge; she continues to speak, thinking he hears her, but her listener is now one of the brothers she fears, to whom she thus betrays herself. Whoever watches the play feels a catch at his heart, as he perceives her error while she is still unaware of it. The impulse is to cry out to her to beware. Some of Webster's devices are, however, much less innocent than this one. The avenging brothers revel in macabre inventions to torture their poor victim: one of them, feigning to give her his hand, leaves a severed hand in her grasp; she is shown wax figures which represent the murder of her husband and children; the inmates of a madhouse are let loose in her palace.

These inferior artistic expedients are, however, relieved by the poetry of melancholy and death which dominates the whole tragedy. Webster is a true poet, the author of some of the most beautiful songs of the Renascence, and throughout, in the very web of his style, are images, funereal in mood, which have the breath of graveyards upon them, yet strike and stir the heart. More than this, the play contains the character of the duchess. At first, although her love endears her, she is not original, but she is transfigured by persecution and becomes in her despair a lofty and solemn figure. Throughout her cruel trials she never fails to ennoble the tragedy by the sombre poetry of her speech. Her reason is proof against all the assaults upon her. Cariola, her woman, struggles and cries out when she is faced with death, but death cannot make the duchess tremble. So beautiful and

so noble does she remain in death that her brother, who has ordered her murder, cannot bear to see her face:

> Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young.

Not until Edgar Poe was there another genius as completely morbid as Webster. His highly special and restricted talent was active only in one genre and accomplished only two memorable plays. He was an artist, but a painful and laborious one. The effort to which production compelled him recalls Ben Jonson. His preface to *The White Devil* shows that, like Jonson, he knew the *limæ labor et mora*, that, like him, he despised popular improvisations and the judgments of the public. A contemporary satirist made fun of the trouble writing was to him:

> How he scrubs: wrings his wrists: scratches his pate!

But Webster gloried in his own painstaking. He would have attempted the most difficult form of art, for it was his desire to compose, in despite of the prevailing taste, a regular sententious tragedy, respectful of the unities, lofty in style, having its chorus and messenger. The aspiration was curious in one who stands for the triumph of melodrama raised to the level of true poetry.

9. *John Fletcher (1579-1625)*[1] *and his Collaborators.*—The production of the considerable body of work very inexactly specified, in the 1647 folio, as by Beaumont and Fletcher, began about 1607. In fact, it included, besides some plays written by the two friends together or separately, many others written by Fletcher with various collaborators and produced during the ten years after Beaumont's death. In the 1679 folio, which is complementary to that of 1647, there are as many as fifty-seven plays. This is the most considerable of the dramatic collections of the time which have been preserved. Its only unity is supplied by the personality of Fletcher, which holds together the parts of this vast whole.

John Fletcher, born in 1579, was the younger son of a clergy-

[1] *The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*, ed. Dyce, 11 vols 1843-6); Variorum edition, 12 vols. (1904 et seq); ed. Glover and Waller (Cambridge English Cl[illegible]
2 [illegible]
of [illegible]
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Shakespeare.

excellent domestic comedy *The Scornful Lady* (1610), *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* most nimble and amusing of parodies, the tragi-comedy *Philaster* (1609), and two pure tragedies, *The Maid's Tragedy* and *A King and No King* (1611).

All these plays show a surprising knowledge of the stage. Reasons of style and versification have led recent critics to attribute their best parts to Beaumont, a conclusion supported by Fletcher's failure to produce anything as remarkable in later years. However this may be, several of these works must be studied at some length, for they mark both the apotheosis of dramatic skill and the beginning of the decline.

The flexibility and what may be called the modernism of the drama of the period cannot be thoroughly understood without knowledge of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle.* Partly a burlesque or parody, this is a play hard to define, to which many diverse elements have contributed, all blended so as to prove the dexterity of the authors and produce a very curious and very merry comedy, alive although it lacks depth, which might, in many respects, have been written yesterday. It has analogies with the "revues" which make fun of current fashions and events. Almost alone of its kind during the English Renascence, it emphasises the astonishing variety of the drama of the period.

The play has a twofold object. First, it mocks the craze of the citizens for romantic literature, for the adventures of knights-errant, the tales of Amadis of Gaul and Mirrors of Chivalry. Such reading turned their heads, like Don Quixote's, made them dream that they were the heroes of marvellous adventures. If Heywood's *Four Prentices of London* be recalled, it will be seen that Beaumont and Fletcher did not gratuitously invent this taste, that they had their reasons for endowing the citizens with some of the extravagance of Don Quixote, whose history was published in 1605 and very probably known to them, although it had not yet been translated. Secondly, the play makes fun of the vanity of the city, the desire to be glorified on the stage which such as Munday, Chettle, Dekker and Heywood were wont to gratify. Sarcasm, invariably merry, is aimed at the plays which crowned the citizens with an aureole, flattered the martial vanity of the apprentices, their pride in the trained bands.

The mockery is extraordinarily dexterous The scene is laid as much in the front of the house as on the stage. A worthy

most striking passages they will attain to superior beauty, supreme refinement. In fact, when they transplant their flowers, they cut them off from the earth which nourishes them. They make the real unreal, yet do it with undeniable skill. The play is full of melodious tirades, graceful similes and images; the flowery, pleasant style is far less difficult than Shakespeare's. These playwrights charm more quickly than he, if for a shorter time.

The Maid's Tragedy, their masterpiece, has, together with similar characteristics, more substance. It is a tragedy of unknown source, its subject apparently the invention of the authors. It departs from the epic manner and tends to be romantic. The factitious and forced sentiments of the characters reflect, however, with fair accuracy, manners which were new in the Stuart period. The situation on which the play is based is that an absolute king, reigning by divine right, is reputed unassailable whatever be his acts; his courtiers regard loyalty as their first duty; and society is dominated by the cult of honour in the Spanish sense of the word, with the element of singularity and spuriousness which must necessarily accompany it. The English court under James I. and Charles I. and after the Restoration had more than one analogy with the theme of this tragedy. The spirit of the Cavaliers already prevails in it.

The king had made Evadne his mistress, and to cloak his relations with her marries her with all solemnity to the honourable but weak Amintor, who knows nothing of the royal amours and who repudiates Aspasia, his betrothed, for the sake of this marriage. On the night of the wedding, Evadne informs Amintor that he will be her husband only in name and that the king is her lover. Evadne's brother, the general Melantius, returns from the wars and perceives the melancholy which Amintor, his intimate friend, fails to conceal beneath an appearance of cheerfulness. He persuades him to confidence, and although he finds him loyally resigned to his misfortune, yet resolves to punish the king. His sister Evadne shall kill him. In a violent scene, Melantius tames this proud woman, even threatening her with his dagger, makes her see the enormity of her fault and inspires her with the determination to slay her lover. She fulfils her promise, binds the king while he lies asleep in bed, then awakens him, gives vent in speech to ferocious hatred, and stabs him. When, blood-stained knife in hand, she appears before Amintor,

thinking she has won back his love, all she obtains from him is a cry of horror, and in the hope of a word of pardon she turns her knife against herself and falls dead at his feet.

Aspasia, whose unhappy lot names the play, is a colourless character. From the moment of her desertion she does no more than seek death, and she finally succeeds, when she is disguised as a man, in getting herself killed by Amintor's sword. But except for her this tragedy presents a rapid and powerful sequence of the most effective scenes, so well contrived, so eloquent and so intense that the improbability of the characters is unnoticed. A penetrating study is necessary to discover the truth hidden beneath an admirable exterior, the fact, namely, that this tragedy is striking rather than true or profound.

Except for Melantius, who is drawn strongly and sustainedly, the characters present many difficulties and inconsequences which resist analysis. Amintor is not only exasperating but also incomprehensible. His loyalty may indeed prevent him from striking at the king who has unworthily deceived him, but what is there to keep him from killing Evadne when she declares her shame and defies him? Why does he consent to cloak her infamy by assuming cheerfulness?

Even Evadne, haughty, brave, shameless, fierce and superb, is rather an admirable acting part than a consistent character. If she be not amorous but ambitious, why does she agree with the king on the concealment which robs her of the prestige and power of an avowed royal mistress? If she be merely ambitious, why is her conversion so sudden and complete? That she should yield to her brother's virile strength is comprehensible, but not that she should turn lovingly to the vacillating Amintor. What we know of her prepares us ill for her ferocity in the scene in which she kills the king: we are too ignorant of the details of her fall to be convinced by her explosion of hatred. Was it that she cherished in her heart feelings deeper than the ambition which alone urged her to her first fault?

These defects are, however, apparent only on reflection. The scenic and dramatic qualities of the work are surprising. The concentration is equal to that in the French tragedies. There is no secondary plot, for Aspasia's fate is linked up with that of Evadne. The unity of place is, in its broad sense, preserved, and the unity of time is respected: the whole of the action takes place

in the town of Rhodes on the eve and morrow of Evadne's wedding-day. Throughout, the play is rendered easy by its harmonious verse and its graceful language which even to-day is not out of date.

(*b*) Fletcher's Collaboration with Shakespeare.—It seems to have been after Beaumont's marriage, in 1613, that the two friends separated and that Fletcher for a time collaborated with Shakespeare. At least, it is admitted that *Henry VIII.* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* are plays by Fletcher or, according to the most recent criticism, by Fletcher and Massinger, which include certain passages by Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's custom was not to work with a colleague, but to recast the plays in his company's repertory which had come to seem old, putting new life into them. In his last years, however, when he had already severed his connection with the stage and left London for Stratford-on-Avon, some of his sketches for plays may have remained unfinished, and he may have entrusted their completion to the most brilliant of the younger dramatists. The two plays, chiefly *Henry VIII.*, have great if scattered beauties. One of the noblest women's characters, Catherine of Aragon, whom Henry VIII. repudiates, is apparently drawn by Shakespeare. Each hand is visible: Fletcher's habitual adroitness and rather too facile graces of style can be distinguished side by side with the more robust and truer touches of Shakespeare's genius.

(*c*) Fletcher's Unaided Work.—Fletcher by himself wrote, or signed alone, a certain number of plays, some tragedies and tragi-comedies and, more especially, some comedies. They are all abundantly romantic. The best of the tragedies are *Valentinian* (1614) and *Bonduca* (1614), of the tragi-comedies, *The Humorous Lieutenant* (1619) and *The Loyal Subject* (1618), and the best known of the comedies are *Monsieur Thomas* and *The Pilgrim* (1621). Everywhere Fletcher shows his inherent understanding of the stage, lively ease in dialogue and elegance of style. But when he is thus uncontrolled by a collaborator, his lack of regular constructive power is apparent: in the tragedies, characters as well as situations are romantic and sentimentality is substituted for passion; in the comedies, the search for curious incidents has precedence over character-study, and indecency, instead of coarseness, appeals for laughter. The favourite man's

character is a witty profligate like Mirabel in *The Wild Goose Chase,* who affects an unbridled corruption far beyond reality and makes cynical love to all women, one who is capable of true love, but bound by his own declarations to flee marriage. The heroines by their extraordinary freedom of speech travesty the mischievous audacity of Shakespeare's Beatrice and Rosalind; they listen to men uttering words with the most indelicate implications and reply almost in the same language.

Fletcher a little compensates for these blemishes by a poetry which never leaves him: at its lowest it consists in elegance and distinction of language; when it gives itself free rein it produces the numerous exquisite songs scattered through his plays of which the glory is such that they are worthy to be compared even with Shakespeare's.

He is also particularised by his special versification, distinct not only from Shakespeare's, but also from that of Beaumont and all his other contemporaries. It is by this that it has been possible to determine his part in the large collection of plays attributed to him and his principal associate. Shakespeare progressed throughout his career towards greater prosodical freedom, an increased flexibility which would allow him to adapt his blank verse to every kind of mood. Hence his varied divisions of the line, his light or weak endings and the practice which grew upon him of continuing a phrase from one line to another. Fletcher chose a line which in two out of three cases ends in one and sometimes in several hypermetric syllables. This soft but effeminate prolongation of sound hardly allows the voice to rise; it is like an oversoft cushion into which the foot sinks. It makes it impossible for the sense to be continued from one line to the next. This practice of Fletcher's is carried to the point at which it becomes a mannerism. It has the effect of shortening his sentences so that they are apt to be restricted to the line. Rhetorical effects are obviated, but there is, at the same time, a loss of scale. His style belonged to the future rather than the past, and was much in favour in the Restoration period when Shakespeare was considered to make too difficult an appeal to the mind and to be archaic.

(*d*) FLETCHER'S COLLABORATION WITH MASSINGER.—After Beaumont's death Fletcher, who had the habit of collaboration, found other partners, and there is hardly a contemporary play-

wright who did not work with him. The names of Jonson, Field, Tourneur and Rowley are associated with his. The chief of his coadjutors was, however, Philip Massinger, who, before he ventured alone, produced ten plays with Fletcher in the four years from 1619 to 1622. Fletcher's junior by four years, he was in some sort his assistant and pupil. Fletcher, master of the play-factory, seems to have paid him for his work and taken sole credit for the plays they produced together, Massinger uttering no protest. The protest was, however, voiced, even immediately, by others, and recent criticism has established that Massinger took a considerable part in the composition of some of the most popular plays attributed to Fletcher only. Among these are the historical tragedies *Thierry and Theodoret* and *The False One* (1620), the comedies *The Little French Lawyer* (1619), *The Spanish Curate* and the *Beggar's Bush*.

It seems to have been Massinger's subordinate task to write preliminary and concluding scenes, while Fletcher kept the critical scenes to himself. But the laborious junior often exceeded these narrow and ungrateful limits. More than Fletcher, he felt the need for regular composition; he had a taste for moral problems and a real genius for dialectical scenes and for legal discussions. The collaboration produced plays of rather mixed and unequal character, although Fletcher's facile verve and Massinger's intellectualism are sometimes happily complementary to each other. We shall presently deal with Massinger's independent work, but it is impossible to consider this collaboration without noticing the extreme merit of the tragedies of *Thierry and Theodoret* and *The False One*. In the former the self-denial of the pure Ordella is contrasted with the cruelty of the lascivious Brunchaut. *The False One* has the same theme as Corneille's *Mort de Pompée* and its brilliant eloquence was not surpassed, if indeed it was equalled, by the French poet.

Before leaving Fletcher's work and particularly its most famous part, that written in collaboration with Beaumont, we would wish to establish what were its distinguishing marks, wherein lay its charm and its weakness. The floating islets of this poetry are pleasant to see and give an illusory impression of stability, but soon they are revealed as unattached and unsolid, unbound to the deep earth, so many agglomerations of waste matter to which deposits from every quarter have blown or

drifted forming a thin layer of vegetable soil. Thus does the poetic work of Beaumont and Fletcher float on the surface of Renascence literature. Hardly a single tie connects it with deep and true feeling, but at first sight its charm is ravishing. Hazlitt has justly compared the plays of these poets to beautiful trees which are crowned with blossom but cannot bear fruit.

CHAPTER VIII

SHAKESPEARE'S SUCCESSORS—DRAMA UNDER CHARLES I (1625-42)

1. *Philip Massinger (1584-1639).*[1]—The playwrights of whom we still have to speak belong to the reign of Charles I. and should therefore have place in the next book of this history. But they are, in the early part of their career, so entangled with their predecessors that they cannot easily be separated from them. To study them is to continue the earlier subject. It therefore seems best to pursue the study of the drama uninterruptedly until, at a fast approaching date, the theatres were closed When Charles I. succeeded in 1625 only seventeen years of life were left to them.

The playwright who, after Fletcher, dominated the stage by the number and quality of his plays, had long worked with him as a subordinate. To Philip Massinger thirty-seven plays are attributed of which only eighteen are extant. The remnant suffices to outline a figure in literature which was both distinct and distinguished, although not entirely original. In his outstanding qualities, Massinger was a composite of Fletcher and Jonson. The incidents and characters of his tragedies are romantic as Fletcher's, and he reproduces vices and whims as far removed from the ordinary as those drawn in *Volpone*. Yet something in his plays is proper to himself, for he cast in the ready-made moulds more doctrine and the product of greater reflective powers than his precursors. His drama is the drama of ideas. He seems to have been impatient of the restrictions of the stage and the necessity of making sacrifices to the lower elements in the public taste. Yet, because he wished to succeed, he submitted, and there is as much use of material expedients in his plays and as much indecency in his comic dialogue as in the work of any other

[1] Dramatic works, ed. Gifford, 4 vols. (1805, reprinted 1850); same text ed. Cunningham (1870); selected plays ed Symons (Mermaid Series, 2 vols, 1904). Studies: Cruickshank, *Philip Massinger* (Oxford, 1920); M. Chelli, *Le Drame de Massinger* (capital work; 1924); appreciation by M. de Tréveret in *Revue de l'Enseignement des Langues vivantes* (1886-7).

unsophisticated, still made its old demand for lively and curious shows. Literally, playgoers had to be confronted with whatever was presented to their minds. Everything still took material form for them. Thus the persecuting fury of the pagan Theophilus is personified in the demon Harfax, his servant, and the Christian enthusiasm of Dorothea, the virgin martyr, in the young page Angelo, who is in truth her guardian-angel and whom Dekker—his hand is felt here—has adorned with his most melodious poetry. The sufferings of the virgin and of the other Christians are detailed in all their variety of horror. The grace by which Theophilus is finally converted is symbolised by a basket of flowers and fruit brought to him to the sound of celestial music. His very remorse assumes a material form: he sees the ground beneath his feet paved with the eyes of the thousands of Christians he has martyred. Thus Massinger preserves all the powerful and popular allurements of the public stage while he devotes his better abilities to the discussion of ideas. He could not have won acceptance for his ideas unless he had abundantly satisfied that appetite for the concrete which long habit had bred in his audiences.

Presently we find him working alone, unhelped and unhindered. He wrote several comedies: *The City Madam* (1619), *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1625), *The Guardian* (1633)—and many more tragedies and romantic plays: *The Fatal Dowry* (1619), *The Duke of Milan* (1620), *The Unnatural Combat* (1621), *The Maid of Honour* (1622), *The Bondman* (1623), *The Renegado* (1624), *The Roman Actor* (1626), *The Picture* (1629), *The Emperor of the East* (1631).

The one of all these plays which had the most lasting success was a comedy: *A New Way to Pay Old Debts.*[1] Revived in the eighteenth century, it has kept a place in theatrical repertories. It is vigorously constructed, in Jonson's manner, but even more than Jonson's plays it lacks the true *vis comica*. The leading rôle, that of the usurer Sir Giles Overreach, extravagant as Marlowe's Barabas or Jonson's Sir Epicure Mammon, is in no way amusing. Sir Giles is a monster of cupidity to whom gold is a means of power and power a means of expressing cynical inhumanity. He is also an atheist, stayed in his course by nothing in heaven or on earth. He enjoys the misfortunes of a nephew

[1] Ed. by Cruickshank (Oxford, 1926).

whom he has expropriated, and whom he ignominiously turns out of his house. His aim is to marry his daughter to a peer, not because he loves her, but in order that from the position this connection will give him he may insult all the gentlemen he has plundered. He enlarges on his opinions and feelings with an improbable frankness, as when he declares that nothing affords him greater pleasure than the fears of the women and children his machinations have rendered destitute. Although his scheming is finally defeated and he made a laughing-stock, and although he lives within a skilful plot sustained through scenes which are serious and comic by turns, he belongs not to comedy but to satire, and almost forbids laughter. The same is true of Luke in *The City Madam*, a very demon of ingratitude, hypocrisy and malice whose turpitude would be excessive in a melodrama, and who as the central figure of a comedy is doubly repulsive, by his unequalled moral perversity and by his improbability.

It is in serious drama that Massinger really shows his powers. In all the plays we have noticed there are at least fine and eloquent passages and striking scenes. Two among them may be taken as affording the best illustration of the playwright's special talent.

Of *The Roman Actor*, Massinger himself states, "I ever held it the most perfect birth of my Minerva." There is undoubtedly a reminiscence of Jonson's *Sejanus* in this picture of the debauchery and cruelty of imperial Rome, but the play is none the less original. The subject is the love of Domitian and the imperious and sensual Domitia, the wife of a senator. Taking advantage of the emperor's blind passion, she gives the rein to all her caprices, even to desiring the indulgence of the frenzied passion she has conceived for the actor Paris while she has watched his performance. Domitian, when he is informed of this affair, kills Paris, but hesitates to order the immediate execution of his mistress. His vacillation costs him dear, for Domitia, infuriated by the death of Paris and knowing her own life in danger, takes the initiative. She conspires with all the victims of the emperor's lust and tyranny and, although he is warned by a soothsayer and takes many precautions, he is stabbed by the ladies of the palace with Domitia at their head. She pays the death-penalty, but the tyrant has fallen.

These vigorous and skilful scenes are very effective. Yet they

are no more than a framework for the more original scenes in which Paris figures, now discussing with his brother-actors his profession in which he believes and which he follows enthusiastically, now pleading before the Senate when he is accused of allowing on the stage allusions offensive to the state. This last scene gives him the opportunity to utter, in a lofty speech, the best of that judicial eloquence which is a distinction of Massinger's dramatic work. Paris, however, does more than plead. Within this drama he successively acts in three plays or fragments, taking the parts of a doctor who cures a miser of his avarice, a lover who implores his unfeeling mistress, and a servant who, in his master's absence, suffers the solicitations of that master's wife and yields to her for fear of her revenge. The part of Paris gives scope for the display of such a variety of talents that, from an actor's point of view, few are richer or more tempting. The character is, moreover, traced skilfully and with a sure hand. Paris's sincere faith in the moral influence of his art attracts sympathy, and his plight, when very respectfully he refuses Domitia's advances, is touching. He does not love her, but he knows that if he repel her she will cause his death. His first thought is, very naturally, for his own safety, but his imagination is presently caught by the idea of a glorious, a theatrical death. What more magnificent situation would there be than that of an actor refusing an empress? He thus goes to his death as a believer goes to martyrdom.

This play, all violence, tumult and crime, should be contrasted with another, *The Maid of Honour*, the most classical Massinger ever wrote, one in which a simple plot is smoothly unfolded and which has unity of action and a regular construction. The central figure is, moreover, a true heroine who incarnates virtue, love and honour. Camiola, the maid of honour, might be one of Corneille's heroines, and like them she has been subject to Spanish influence. She seeks glory in virtue, and is mistress of her heart, for all that it beats passionately. Chimène and Pauline have in her an elder sister whom they never knew.

Camiola, who is rich, is courted at one and the same time by an opulent and high-born coxcomb—a grotesque who never makes us smile and is the sole blemish of this fine play—by an abject court favourite, by a young page ready to make any sacrifice for her, and by the king's natural brother, the handsome, brave and

seductive Bartoldo. She loves Bartoldo, but refuses him because he is a Knight of Malta and would break his vow of celibacy if he married her. He would fall short of the ideal, and she would have his glory all intact. Thus virtue forbids her to follow her heart, and the discouraged Bartoldo sets out as a volunteer for a distant war, where he shows prodigious valour, but is made prisoner. His ransom is fixed at an enormous sum, and his brother, the king, who hates and fears him, is glad to be rid of him and does not pay it. But Camiola, in a transport of love and pity, goes back upon her word; she sends the prisoner both the required sum of money and the promise to marry him which will lead him to accept her gift. Bartoldo, after giving vent to his boundless joy and gratitude, leaves his prison. The very princess against whom he has fought is, however, smitten with sudden and irresistible love at the sight of his martial beauty. She takes the initiative, declares her passion and offers him her hand. Dazzled by such unheard-of good fortune, he forgets Camiola, his vows and his debt. When the marriage is about to be celebrated, Camiola protests, shows the king the signed contract between her and Bartoldo and recalls all she has done. The princess indignantly repudiates her betrothed, who is seized by remorse and begs for pardon. Camiola thereupon declares that all shall know the marriage on which she has decided, and while her lovers tremble in hope and suspense she advances towards a reverend Father who, at her request, receives her to give her to the Church, for she has determined to take the veil. But first she shows Bartoldo how to recover his honour: he must resume the cross of Malta and fight the enemies of the Faith.

Never had a worthier or nobler play, or one more discreet in its use of the means to produce great effects, been seen on the English stage. Camiola steps nobly and bears herself greatly. The virtue she personifies is indeed too complacently eloquent and at times theatrical. Yet she is not all pomp and speechifying. She loves and suffers; she really has a heart.

Elsewhere Massinger has used and also misused sensational stage expedients, but here he has shown the natural tendency of his pure and grave talent. It is in this play that his aspirations are best realised. Throughout his work, however, we are conscious of his probity as a writer. His hand is very sure and his verse remains rhythmic and harmonious in a period in which the

versification of most authors is dislocated, and blank verse, by the accumulated effect of repeated licence, has lost its cadence and all but ceased to exist. It is true that all Massinger's modifications are not improvements. He is carried away by a talent for oratory, so that he is often strained and monotonous. His imagination lacks spontaneity. He has a certain number of rare but unvarying images which he repeats from play to play, sometimes clothing them in identical words. It has even been possible to make a list of these. Massinger is rather an industrious than an inspired poet, and his plays do not, like those of some of his less correct rivals, give either the surprise or the enjoyment of lyricism. Taken altogether, however, his massive and often noble work is such that it redeems his age from the charge of decadence.

2. *John Ford (1586-1639?).*[1]—John Ford, who was the same age as Massinger, produced, at the same time as he, work which was narrower than his but bore more clearly the impress of its author's personality. He belonged to a good Devonshire family and was in 1602 admitted to the Middle Temple. This is as much as is known of his life. To imagine his person we are helped only by two lines which show a pensive and solitary figure:

> Deep in a dump John Forde was alone got,
> With folded arms and melancholy hat.

His drama is influenced by Burton's famous *Anatomy of Melancholy* which appeared at the same time as his first plays. Some youthful verse and prose, still extant, reveal him as an amoral pagan, convinced of the futility of passion and the power of love to justify itself. His work betrays a morbid temperament, curious of the strange and attracted by the perverse, yet a true poet who wrote carefully, harmoniously and restrainedly, and whose nature inclined him to a dramatic form more classical than that affected by his predecessors.

He collaborated with Webster, Rowley and Dekker, but was less prodigal of his co-operation than his contemporaries. The best known of the plays he thus produced is the *Witch of Edmonton,* of which Dekker seems to have been the principal author The essential part of as much of Ford's own work as has been

[1] Works ed. Gifford and revised Dyce, 3 vols. (1869 and 1895); selected plays ed. by Havelock Ellis in the Mermaid Series (1888); *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* in the Belles Lettres Series.

preserved consists of five plays, the *Lover's Melancholy, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, The Broken Heart, Love's Sacrifice* and *Perkin Warbeck,* all written between 1627 and 1633.

The last-named is a drama of English history, the final example of a genre, once popular, which was neglected after the end of the sixteenth century. *Perkin Warbeck* is a well-contrived and fairly interesting but rather flat play. Nothing in it is either new or original.

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has ended, she repeats the news she has just received to the court. She has become queen and it is as a queen that she speaks. She fulfils her first duty by ordering the murderer of Ithocles to be executed; then, in the temple in which the coronation ceremony is to be performed, she informs all present that, while they thought she was dancing unfeelingly, she received a mortal wound. And when she has kissed the dead lips of Ithocles and placed a ring on his finger, she dies of a broken heart to the sound of a dirge which she herself has "fitted" for her end.

On analysis, the scenes of this play are seen to be unreal and its situations romantic, but its atmosphere of subtle and poignant pity and its harmony remain. Its value is in its poetry, in the impression it constantly gives of suffering virtue and implacable passion. Ford, by the belief in fatality which dominates his work, joins hands with the Greeks, not by an effect of mere artistry but in virtue of a special temperament. The impression he makes is as deep as it is painful. His plays move in a heavy, still and thundery atmosphere. Their lack of even the lightest breath of lively and wholesome air is disquieting. Ford's persistence in painting exquisite suffering and the refinements of perversity is a manifest sign of decadence, yet it constitutes his originality which outweighs his reminiscences and his borrowing.

3. *James Shirley (1596-1666).*[1]—James Shirley, whom Lamb calls "the last of a great race," was a more prolific and a more adaptable writer than Ford. His plays are among the most correct and the most outstanding of those which appeared in the reign of Charles I., that is from 1625 until the theatres were closed in 1642. But while Ford's work struck, with all its faults, a note which was new and sometimes very penetrating, Shirley at his best did no more than continue cleverly what Jonson, Fletcher and Massinger had begun, imparting nothing peculiarly his own.

Shirley was an educated man who had been through both universities, and a fair poet who wrote a *Narcissus* inspired by Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. He was first a schoolmaster and then a Protestant clergyman, but gave up his living when he was converted to Catholicism. He began to write for the stage when he was about thirty years old, won favour at court and was commissioned to compose masques which enjoyed a very high

[1] *Dramatic Works and Poems*, ed. Gifford and Dyce, 6 vols. (1833); selected plays ed. Gosse in the Mermaid Series, 1 vol. (1888).

repute. He had the lyric gift of his predecessors and the song, "The glories of our blood and state," which occurs in one of his plays, is in every anthology. His production was checked by the Revolution. He was of the king's party and went into exile in France after the failure of the Royalist cause, afterwards returning to England and to his schoolmaster's calling. He had the satisfaction of witnessing the Restoration and the revival of his plays, but he died in the Fire of London in 1666. He is thus a link between two periods of dramatic history.

He gained distinction in tragedy and in comedy. More than Massinger, and especially more than Ford, he had the adaptability necessary to success in these opposite fields.

His best two tragedies are *The Traitor* (1631) and *The Cardinal* (1641). *The Traitor* is based on the famous story of Lorenzo de Medici to which Musset returned in *Lorenzaccio*. The psychological interest of Musset's play, the portrayal of a man of noble character, ruled by republican opinions, who becomes vicious while he seeks to corrupt the Duke of Florence in order to ruin him, is wanting in Shirley's tragedy. Shirley's Lorenzo is impelled to betray the duke by the mere ambition to usurp his throne. He is throughout an underhand and hypocritical scoundrel. The interest of the play lies in his intrigues and in the skill with which he lays his plots and diverts suspicion from himself. On occasion he simulates republican sentiment, but only in order the better to ensnare his dupes. The play undoubtedly includes effective scenes, but the most striking of them are too closely imitated from Cyril Tourneur's *Revenger's Tragedy*. The tragedy is, however, well constructed and carefully written.

The Cardinal, which Shirley himself esteemed his masterpiece, is in the class of tragedies of bloodshed and horror and connected with Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*. It has enough of the tragic force of this model to show that great sombre subjects persisted to the end in the drama of the Renascence. Structurally it is weaker than *The Traitor*.

Because Shirley's comedies are partly realistic; because they paint manners and fashions and literary crazes which changed with years, they are newer than his tragedies. While he cannot create really original characters, he adroitly sketches scenes from the life of the well-to-do classes of his day. This understanding of contemporary society keeps alive *The Wedding*

(1626), *The Changes* (1632), *Hyde Park* (1632), *The Gamester* (1633) and especially *The Lady of Pleasure* (1635). This last play, which is full of arguments between a husband and his wife, she desiring always to be in the mode and he fearing that she will ruin him, is the prototype of more than one comedy of the succeeding age. In spite of its inferior vigour and wit, it foreshadows Vanbrugh's *Provoked Husband*, and even, one hundred and fifty years in advance, Sheridan's *School for Scandal* and the differences of Sir Peter with Lady Teazle.

Besides these comedies of manners, Shirley wrote others which are romantic and might equally well be called tragi-comedies. In these he shows himself the faithful disciple of Fletcher, like whom he is sometimes influenced by Spain. Spanish drama was beginning to be known and it was not therefore to Spanish stories that Shirley had recourse. For the *Young Admiral* he went straight to Lope de Vega and for *The Opportunity* (1634) to Tirso de Molina. The one of his romantic comedies which he himself esteemed the best is *The Imposture*. In this an ambitious aspirant to the hand of the daughter of the Duke of Mantua seeks to get rid of a formidable rival, the son of the Duke of Ferrara, by causing a meeting between him and a mistress of his own whom he has substituted for the high-born maiden.

To sum up: Shirley's comedies can be read with a calm pleasure, for his ingenuity is sometimes satisfying, his pictures of contemporary life are sometimes interesting and his elegant style is generally meritorious, but he never affords the lively enjoyment which his predecessors supplied, at least intermittently. He continued a tradition to which he gave no freshness and contributed nothing very new.

4. *Glapthorne and Brome.*—It was especially by his merits as a writer that Shirley surpassed all the later playwrights[1] except

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Brome should have been more ambitious and less humble. He introduces himself modestly as a man of no account, calls himself not a poet but a playmaker. Yet he seems to have taken conscientious pains with his work. While his is a prosaic spirit, while he is usually attracted by realities of no elevated order, he is, none the less, both observant and vigorous.

5. *Other Playwrights of the Second Rank*.—This review of the dramatic writers of the Renascence has hitherto included only the principal names. To be complete it should also deal with a fair number of authors of the second rank, of whom some have merit, and with several anonymous plays of which certain are highly interesting.

Some of these plays were ascribed to Shakespeare by contemporary publishers or have been attributed to him subsequently.[1] Among them are two on the national history which are very remarkable, *Edward the Third* and *Sir Thomas More*, and also an excellent comedy, *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, and a romantic play, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, of which Fletcher was the principal author, although most critics admit that Shakespeare

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had a hand in it. These plays from the Shakespeare apocrypha must be added to those already studied, *Arden of Feversham* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*. They are the most noteworthy of a considerable group of which the authorship is conjectural. Another anonymous play written with much talent is *Nero*,[1] printed in 1633. It is the work of a mediocre playwright who was both a scholar and a true poet.

To the authors already cited, certain others who wrote in the last years of Elizabeth should be added: William Haughton, the prolific Henry Chettle who collaborated with several of the famous playwrights, and Henry Porter, author of a rather broad but strong farce, *Two Angry Women of Abington*.

Under James I. there flourished Robert Armin, Barnabe Barnes, Gervase Markham and, especially, John Day. The last named wrote amusing comedies, *The Isle of Gulls* (1606), *Law Tricks* and *Humour Out of Breath* (1608), which are inspired by Shakespeare, but which, since they lack sparkle and dash and betray a search for symmetry and for epigrams, rather recall Lyly. Day's most original work is *The Parliament of Bees*, a fantastic production which is in the nature of a masque, or rather like a series of eclogues. The actor Nathaniel Field (1587-1633), who was educated on Jonson and Chapman and collaborated with Fletcher and Massinger, wrote good-humoured antithetic comedies, *A Woman is a Weathercock* (1610) and *Amends for Ladies*.

Under Charles I., Thomas Randolph (1605-35), a young Cambridge man, gave promise of a brilliant career. His comedy, *The Muses' Looking-Glass*, is a satirical review of vice, with a realistic framework hardly less amusing than that provided for *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*; and his pastoral, *Amyntas, or the Fatal Dowry*, inspired by Tasso and Guarini and written with careful art, is one of the best examples of this artificial genre. Randolph died, however, at the age of thirty. Sir John Suckling (1609-42), a great admirer of Shakespeare who is better known as a lyrical poet, had dramatic proclivities, and both his tragedy *Aglaura* (1639), and his amusing comedy, *The Goblins*, won him applause. Literary history is, however, especially interested in the playwrights who were links between the stage of the Renascence and of the Restoration. Lodowick Carlell, who pro-

[1] *Nero and Other Plays* (Mermaid Series, 1888).

duced the *Deserving Favourite* in 1629 and *Arviragus and Philicia* in 1639, accomplished, in 1664, an adaptation of Corneille's *Heraclius*. Robert Davenport, author of *A New Trick to Cheat the Devil* in 1639, wrote, in 1661, *The City Night-Cap*. Thomas Killigrew was author of *The Prisoners* in 1641, and of tragic and comic plays under Charles II. Sir William d'Avenant (1606-68) produced five plays under Charles I., of which the most interesting, *The Platonic Lovers* (1636), was acted in the last years of the Commonwealth, and he also inaugurated Restoration drama with his *Siege of Rhodes*.

These dramatists betray the influence of the new age by their imitation of Spanish and French writers of romance. Carlell's plays are based on d'Urfé and Mademoiselle de Scudéry, as are those of d'Avenant, whose taste for sentimental heroics and the casuistry of love blazed the track for the heroic plays of the reign of Charles II.

6. *The Closing of the Theatres. Conclusion.*—Dramatic production, abundant to the last, was suddenly checked in 1642, when the theatres were closed by Parliament. After the playhouses had struggled for existence against the Puritans for three-quarters of a century, and made them their laughing-stock, it was to the Puritans that victory finally fell. The stage had no sooner become popular than the war had been declared. Gosson was writing his *School of Abuse* in 1579; in 1583 the Puritan Philip Stubbs renewed the attack much more vigorously with his *Anatomy of Abuses*, in which he claims biblical support for his condemnation of the drama. His book provoked many replies—from Lodge, Nashe, Field, Gager, Heywood and others. Fifty years later a pendant to it was supplied by the famous *Histriomastix* of William Prynne (1632). This fierce denunciation from the pen of a fanatic was the result of seven years of work and reached enormous dimensions. It is a depository of all the accumulated diatribes of the Fathers of the Church and the moralists against plays and actors; and it was also a direct attack on the court, where at this time dramatic art found its sole support. The companies of actors had been protected by various noblemen under Elizabeth, but from the time of the accession of James I. they all depended on the king or the queen, and such concentration was accentuated under Charles I. Prynne stigmatised as "notorious whores" the leading actresses, whom Queen

Henrietta had brought over from France, and he paid for his insults when he was sentenced to lose his ears in the pillory, to pay a heavy fine and to be imprisoned at the king's pleasure. Nine years after the appearance of his book, Parliament, having barely secured its triumph over the king, ordered the closing of the theatres. Their association with royalty proved unfortunate for them. The demolition of all the playhouses was decreed; all actors seized were ordered to be whipped; and everyone who attended a dramatic performance was made liable to a fine of five shillings. For eighteen years the theatres, which had been places of intense, noisy life, were silent. When they were once more thrown open, their repertory was largely new and their audiences were largely different.

It behoves us, before we conclude, to take a general view of the drama, the great home of the literary activity of the English Renascence. When extant plays and plays which survive only in their titles are added together, their total number comes near a thousand, and this luxuriant prolificity was concentrated within narrow limits of time. Only sixty-three years separate the date on which the first public theatre was opened from that on which all the playhouses were closed. It is easy to conceive of a man who in the course of his life was present at the first performances of all the works which made the English stage illustrious. Born in 1567, he might have seen Lyly's *Endymion*, Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and Kyd's *Spanish Tragedie* when he was about twenty; Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry IV.*, Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* and Dekker's *Shoemakers Holiday* when he was about thirty; *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, Jonson's *Volpone*, Cyril Tourneur's *Revenger's Tragedy* and Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* at about forty; Beaumont and Fletcher's *Maid's Tragedy*, Webster's *White Devil* and Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* at about forty-five; the first plays in which Beaumont and Fletcher and Middleton and Rowley collaborated at about fifty; Massinger's *Roman Actor*, Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and Heywood's *English Traveller* at about sixty; Shirley's *Traitor* and *Gamester* and d'Avenant's *Platonic Lovers* in his later sixties.

Would he, witnessing this sequence of playwrights and plays, have perceived an evolution? The family likeness between most of these works, composed on the same principle, might have

hidden it from him. Nearly all of them divide a whole story, seldom invented by the author but rather taken from books, into scenes. They thus share their descent from the mystery-plays of the Middle Ages, and like them appeal, in their scenes, by turns to the imagination, the understanding, the feelings and the senses. Like them, they endeavour to interest the whole of man and of mankind and not merely learned and fastidious persons. Like them, they almost invariably mingle comedy and tragedy.

Their likeness to each other is the result of this conception of drama which they have in common, and the breadth of the principle on which they depend produces, at the same time, their diversity. There was no importation from antiquity of regularity of structure, and therefore no predominance of classical principles *of construction which, since a playwright merely accepts them,* are necessarily impersonal and have a clearly eliminating effect. There is nothing academic about these plays, not even about those of the classicist Jonson. A lively air blows through them all. The place given, even in tragedy, to a homely comic element is a corrective of romanticism and imparts realism everywhere. The poetry diffused over all and the habitual lyricism are controlled, tempered and vivified by this realism. Nothing is quite cut off from the earth, entirely in the clouds, in a world of abstraction. The element of direct observation, the reflections of real life which occur in some scene of every play, give abiding interest to parts of even the most mediocre and factitious production.

The very free field given to the dramatists also enabled them to let their personality have play. Each of them could, according to his temperament and powers and his opportunities of observation, imprint his own mark on his work. Ignorant though we are of the limits of the individual accomplishment of playwrights, and in spite of the difficulties due to the custom of collaboration, we easily distinguish certain very distinct figures. Nothing is less liable to be confused than Lyly's courtly wit, Marlowe's rabid ardour, Dekker's tender, sentimental realism, Marston's cynical harshness, the robustness of Jonson's thought and style, the sombre, melodramatic poetry of Webster, Heywood's simple pathos, Middleton's dry, cutting manner, the skilful and elegant romanticism of Beaumont and Fletcher, the rhetorical vein of Massinger and Ford's disquieting subtlety, not to mention the superior genius at the centre of this constellation, "myriad-

minded Shakespeare," who is not to be contained by a couple of epithets.

The gifts of life, variety, poetry and realism lead us to overlook defects which are numerous and sometimes enormous—loose, disjointed, clumsy or overweighted composition, the assignment of overmuch space to broad, low buffoonery, the cult of melodramatic effects, the lavish introduction of physical horrors and macabre subjects, the frequent lack of execution and of loftiness of aim, consequent on the desire for immediate success.

In what is the evolution of this drama perceptible? Is it to be found elsewhere than in the differences between authors? Does it consist in a rise which culminates in Shakespeare's masterpieces and a subsequent decline? Even if, with infinite difficulty, Shakespeare be abstracted from the field of consideration, we perceive, as is natural, that the qualities properly of the stage were almost constantly acquiring that additional skill which only experience can confer. There is something archaic about the first plays even of the great period, about the too plainly deliberate clash of wits in Lyly, and about Marlowe's vast declamations. Dramatic style is gradually fashioned and made flexible; the metrical line, at first too rigid, relaxes and loses its monotony; prose is more frequently used and grows nimbler; tone approximates increasingly to the natural, normal voice. Conventional characters bequeathed by the miracle-plays, personified vice and the clown, give place more and more to real beings or those who aspire to be such. The clown has neither place nor date; he is a comic actor rather than a character. He does not long survive Shakespeare, who uses him with extreme skill yet never quite cleanses him of his original taint of unreality. His disappearance marks the advance of drama, not indeed towards more truth, but towards more realism. In the work of Jonson, Middleton, Fletcher and Ford, hardly any subsists in the externals and the equipment of plays which is not modern. Their plays are, therefore, sometimes astonishingly near to ourselves although very little separates them from their predecessors. The same force of realism sweeps away, little by little, the fantastic and fairy elements which become less popular. The appeal to imagination loses strength and daring. If characters and situations tend to be less true to nature, it is not that the poets give more space to

dreams, but that, as their knowledge of feeling grows less sure, they show an increased inclination for sensation.

They draw nearer to reality in externals while in essentials they become more remote from it: comedy shows a preference for eccentricity and anomalies, and tragedy passes from the epic to the romantic.

It cannot be denied that the romantic was there from the beginning, but from decade to decade it developed and little by little superseded the historical character which at first belonged to many plays. Dramas of national history ceased, with hardly any exceptions, to be written after the sixteenth century. Except for a few excursions into Roman or foreign history, subjects came to be supplied by romances, whether Italian, Spanish or French. More and more, the portrayal of normal thought and feeling made room for that of the extraordinary and complicated, whether superhuman or morbid. In order to hold the attention of audiences much used to plays, dramatists sought to astonish them, or supplied them with the most highly flavoured dishes. From the love of Romeo and Juliet, drama proceeded to the incestuous passion of Giovanni and Isabella. From portraits of English kings and lords not unfaithful to history, whence the playwrights took them, it passed to monarchs increasingly exotic and imaginary. Comic characters drawn mainly from life—Juliet's nurse, Falstaff, Justice Shallow—evolved to the excesses of Volpone or Overdone.

Avoid him as we may, we return inevitably to Shakespeare. It was he who humanised the initial violence of this drama, and at his death it tended once more to become remote from the central truth—that of character and feeling.

BOOK V

THE END OF THE RENASCENCE (1625-60)

CHAPTER I

PROSE FROM 1625 TO 1660

1. *Literature under Charles I. and the Commonwealth.*[1]—The period which extends from 1625 to 1660 is filled with the political and religious strife of the reign of Charles I. and the triumph of Puritanism. It is usual to consider this time as one in which the previously expansive development of literature was restricted and thought was concentrated on a single book—the Bible. The fact that the dominant figure is that of the great Puritan poet Milton favours this view. The Puritanism which closed the theatres did indeed give a character of strictness to the new age and bring it into contrast with the profane and licentious Renascence. Not only, however, did humanism persist as a force and affect no writer more powerfully than Milton himself, and not only are freethinking and freedom of manners still apparent in the poetry of the Cavaliers, but beyond this the religious movement of the age was not exclusively due to the zealous Calvinists who were able for a time to establish Presbyterian discipline in the country, or to the Independents who rebelled against this discipline and claimed that the individual had the right to interpret the Bible according to the light that was in him. Anglicanism, lukewarm and indolent under Elizabeth, acquired new life from the struggle. The pious fervour of the middle years of the seventeenth century was wrought at least as much by the zeal of Episcopalians, not excepting those of them who reverted to Roman Catholicism, as by the subversive passion and sombre religion of their adversaries. In no other period of their history did the Anglicans produce works, both in verse and

[1] See E. Dowden, *Anglican and Puritan* (1901); Ackland, *Little Gidding and Its Inmates* (1903); and Shorthouse's historical novel, *John Inglesant* (1881).

in prose, which were as noble and had as much unction. Literary production was at this time much more various than it at first seems to be. Yet it is undeniable that the religious revival gave this generation its general character and distinguished it from the preceding one. In exchange for the liberty it partly lost, it acquired seriousness, a severe dignity. Rich humanity, unlimited curiosity, the sense of the comic mingling with the sense of the tragic in the portrayal of life: all gave place to a passionate controversy on the forms of the Christian religion and a search, so constant that it was an obsession, for the way of salvation.

2. *Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82).*[1]—The contrast is perhaps most apparent in prose. There were no more novels, no more diverting pictures of manners, no entertaining fruits of invention; there were not even the disinterested lucubrations of humanists whose reading amused them. The passage from Robert Burton to Sir Thomas Browne is in this respect very characteristic. The contrast between them is shown up by the very resemblances which make it possible to compare them. Like Burton, Browne was a very learned man, a humanist astonishingly widely and variously read. He was familiar with secular and sacred authors; he lived in studious retirement, complacently following the thread of his thought. He too was an eccentric, and his posthumous vicissitudes were like those of Burton, for he was all but forgotten in the eighteenth century and was restored to honour by Lamb and the romantics.

But they differed even more than they resembled each other. Burton was a clergyman, hauntingly preoccupied with medicine. He himself states that he was "by his profession a divine and by his inclination a physician." His whole book shows his taste for observing facts and details, rather than a desire to inquire into the origin and end of man.

Browne, on the other hand, was a physician by profession and a divine or preacher by inclination. He was a mystic. Outwardly, his life passed happily and calmly, reflecting in no way the troubles of the civil war. He was a Royalist and an Anglican,

[1] His works were edited in 4 vols. by Wilkin (1835-6); in 3 vols. by Sayle (1904); in 3 vols by Morison (Pitt Press Series, 1922), in 3 vols (Golden Cockerell Press, 1923). Principal works in 1 vol. in the Camelot Series (1886).
See also Leslie Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, 2nd series (1876), E. Gosse, *Sir Thomas Browne* (English Men of Letters Series, 1905); and study in French by J. Milsand in *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1858).

but he did not compromise himself and his peace was not disturbed. The exercise of his art won him much renown. He devoted his leisure to studying the antiquities of Norwich, where he lived. He applied Bacon's method to the examination of the fauna of the district and natural phenomena. His science is, like Bacon's, oddly mixed with prejudice, ignorance and ingenuousness, as appears in the most extensive of his works, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica, or Enquiries into very many received tenets and commonly presumed truths* (1647), the very book in which he proposes to criticise and rectify current errors. Nothing gives a better idea of the state of popular science than to note some of the errors he combats: "that Crystal is nothing else but Ice strongly congealed"; "that a diamond is softened or broken by the blood of a goat"; "that an Elephant hath no joints"; "that a Wolf, first seeing a man, begets a dumbness in him"; "that the flesh of Peacocks corrupteth not."

Browne himself, partly owing to his respect for the Bible, retains some errors of this kind. He refuses to accept the system of Copernicus and maintains that the earth is the centre of the universe. He believes in astrology, alchemy, witchcraft and magic. His evidence as a doctor caused two poor women to be put to death as witches.

His mind held a curious medley. In spite of his real and often deep knowledge of natural science, he kept a taste for miracles. This learned man is especially impressed by the narrow limits of science. He reveals his complex soul in the most celebrated and most curious of his books, *Religio Medici,* which he wrote before he was thirty, that is before 1635, and which was published in 1642 and translated into Latin, Dutch, French and German. Guy Patin, who knew it in Latin, says that it was much esteemed in Paris and considers that it proves the author's wit—"Il y a de gentilles choses dans ce livre."

Neither prettiness nor wit is the dominant quality of this work in which the author defines his religion. "I am, I confess," he informs us, "naturally inclined to that which misguided zeal terms superstition." Anglican though he was, he deals so gently with Catholicism that he has been suspected of being a Catholic. He tells us that he "could never hear the Ave-Mary bell without an elevation." He is full of sympathy for all Christian sects and even of pity for infidels. He prides himself on being a cosmo-

politan without national prejudice. At times he might be mistaken for a scholar or deist of the eighteenth century. But this is a superficial resemblance, for he ignores the cult of reason, mental travail invariably leading him to contempt of knowledge. "It is better to sit down in a modest ignorance and rest content with the natural blessing of our own reasons, than buy the uncertain knowledge of this life with sweat and vexation, which death gives every fool gratis." Thus, while he constantly uses his reason, he has no hope of learning by it the things of greatest moment to him. His appetite for faith is great. Far from rejecting religion because it demands concessions from reason, he would have it yet more exacting:

> As for those wingy mysteries in divinity and airy subtleties in religion which have unhinged the brains of better heads, they never stretched the *pia mater* of mine. Methinks there be not impossibilities enough in religion for an active faith. . . . I love to lose myself in a mystery, to pursue my reason to an *O altitudo!*

Far from envying the early Christians the miracles which they witnessed and which compelled them to believe, he considers that their experience would make his faith too little meritorious. Moreover, he sees miracles everywhere, even in existence at its simplest. "Now for my life, it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not a history but a piece of poetry, and would sound to common ears like a fable."

His habitual themes are those of the preacher—the vanity of glory, the nearness of death. He renews them with singularly erudite reminiscences which rekindle the ashes of the most remote historical past, and with constant references to the universe and to cosmographical facts. Hence there is frequently a strangeness and also a loftiness in his writings: thoughts and images are magnified; he imparts a great scale which is natural to him.

The fantastic character of the period is revealed. Browne has affinities with Donne and the "metaphysical" poets. When he wishes to mock man's vain efforts to perpetuate after death a body vowed to destruction, he speaks of:

> Egyptian ingenuity . . . contriving their bodies in sweet consistencies to attend the return of their souls. But all was vanity, feeding the wind and folly. The Egyptian mummies, which Cambyses or time hath spared, avarice now consumeth. Mummy is become merchandise, Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams.

He gives rein to his fancy in *The Garden of Cyrus*, which is a dissertation on quincunxes. Disposition in quincunxes and the number five gradually take on for him a mystic value. He finds quincunxes everywhere—in the sky, on the earth, in the mind of man, in the notes of music, in the optic nerve, in the roots of trees, in leaves. His strangeness of thought is indeed excused by a vein of humour: his capricious leavetaking of his subject is famous. He has worked late into the night; the stars are waning and urge him to rest. "But the quincunx of heaven [the Hyades] runs low and it is time to close the five ports of knowledge. . . . To keep our eyes open longer were but to act our Antipodes. The huntsmen are up in America and they are already past their first sleep in Persia."

Even when Browne deals with the subject he has most at heart—oblivion—he gives free play to his dilettante imagination. His *Hydriotaphia, or Urn Burial* (1658), was inspired by the discovery in a field of some fifty urns containing the remains of human bones. This induced him to meditate on death and on oblivion which soon covers up man's traces, and he was able to air his vast erudition regarding the various ancient modes of burial. He considers that the hope of a survival in memory, which, even in primitive man, was a mad hope, becomes such in a much greater degree as the world grows old and nears its end:

> Twenty-seven names make up the first story before the flood, and the recorded names ever since contain not one living century. The numbers of the dead long exceedeth all that shall live. The night of time far surpasseth the day, and who knows when it was the equinox? Every hour adds unto that current arithmetick, which scarce standeth one moment. And since death must be the *Lucina* of life, and even Pagans could doubt whether thus to live were to die; since our longest sun sets at right descensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness, and have our light in ashes; since the brother of death daily haunts us with dying mementos, and time that grows old in itself bids us hope no long duration—diuturnity is a dream and folly of expectation.

Thus Browne, as he writes, sometimes recalls Montaigne by his confessions, sometimes foreshadows Pascal by the greatness of his cosmic visions. But the insistence with which he places himself in a favourable light, his care to establish himself on a pedestal, awaken a regret for Montaigne's greater spontaneity and less discreet confidences. Browne remarks on his own cour-

age, charity and pity for another's ills, and congratulates himself on his freedom from pride, although, while he lacks the scientist's pride in reason, he possesses the pride of the mystic who believes that his nature is exceptional and that he is privileged to meditate as men rarely do and to receive direct revelations. At the same time, Browne is differentiated from Pascal by what may be called his complacent redundancy. In this there is something of literary artifice, a too apparent rhetoric, and there is also a taste for the eccentric which is evidence of less intense and less inexorable seriousness than belonged to Pascal.

He is, in fact, an artist rather than a thinker, and more interesting as a writer than as a man. His prose is admirable. His style is very distinct from Burton's. His sentences are short, clearly outlined, and modern and restrained in construction. He dates by his vocabulary, for he is a great latiniser. Words which Burton leaves in Latin, in the middle of a sentence, are retained but Anglicised by Browne. His love of the noble shows itself in his preference for long, learned terms. But his search for latinised words is also inspired by his love of cadences. He believes in the music of periods as the poet does in that of verse. He had a passion for harmony, loved it in the sound of organs, even found food for it in the music he heard in taverns. "There is something in it of divinity more than the ear discovers: it is an hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson on the whole world and creatures of God—such a melody to the ear as the whole world, well understood, would afford the understanding." This passion led Browne instinctively to choose the most melodious words, those which make his sentences musical. So subtle is his use of sonorities, that few poets afford in their verses a better feast to the ear than does this mystical doctor in his prose.

3. *The Anglican Clergy. Jeremy Taylor.*[1]—Sir Thomas Browne, religious though he was, was in a sense independent and a follower of his own fancy. But the renewal of piety in the very heart of Anglicanism caused some memorable pages of English prose to be written. Under Charles I. and the Commonwealth, Richard Hooker and John Donne found worthy

[1] Complete works, ed. R. Heber, 15 vols. (1822); ed. C. P. Eden, 10 vols. (1847-52); *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*, in Bohn's Library; *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living, ed. Waller*, 2 vols. (1900).
See E. Gosse, *Jeremy Taylor* (1904); G. Worley, *Jeremy Taylor, a Sketch of His Life and Times* (1904).

successors. Archbishop Laud (1575-1645) was the head of the Church established under Charles I. and also, since he attempted to impose the Anglican liturgy on England and on the Presbyterians of Scotland, an architect of the civil war as he was one of its first victims. He was much hated, and although he opposed Rome he received the supreme insult of an accusation of popery. He was not brought back to Catholicism, but the circumstance that his chief adversaries were the Puritans and the Presbyterians led him to revive everything in Anglicanism which could strengthen the hierarchy, discipline and ceremonial. He desired to give the Anglican form of worship the pomp which distinguishes it from Calvinism and is the mark of the High Church.

This Anglicanism in love with tradition and solemn ritual, respectful of the hierarchy and of fine discipline, gained at this time the adherence of the leading members of the Church of England, except such of them as crossed the barrier and definitely became Roman Catholics, like the Benedictine historian Augustine Baker and Crashaw the poet.

George Herbert (1593-1633),[1] known especially for his poem *The Temple,* left behind him only the few pages of prose which are his picture of a country clergyman, the *Country Parson.* This is among the most characteristic of the prose writings of the time. From a wit and man of fashion, Herbert, towards the end of his short life, became rector of Bemerton, where he was distinguished for his fervent and fastidious piety. His experience was his guide when he drew his ideal portrait of a good parson, in simple, smooth prose which is in contrast to his subtle and often enigmatic poetry. He tells what should be the life, the character and education of a country clergyman, how he should pray, preach and behave on Sundays, how he should keep his church and what rule he should follow, and cause to be followed, in his house, what he should do and say during his pastoral visits. He allows him a time for recreation, in contrast to the morose Puritans. Nothing is more pleasing than his neat, smiling, comfortable church, of a type reproduced in England by the hundred until it became the regulation model. Everything in it signifies the mean between two extremes, between superstition and carelessness, between the gilded luxury of a Catholic cathedral and the depressing nakedness of a dissenters'

[1] *A Priest to the Temple,* ed. Waller (1901).

chapel. Hooker's just mean is realised in the decoration of the church.

George Herbert was one of the intimate friends of Nicholas Ferrar, who founded at about this time the curious community of Little Gidding, a very characteristic expression of the Catholic aspirations of the High Church party. Ferrar, a man of business, who was highly educated, had been in Parliament and had travelled much, refused to respond to the appeal of Rome because he was scandalised by Italian morals, but desired to transport to England certain practices of Roman discipline which he admired. He retired in 1625 to the village of Little Gidding, and there founded a sort of Protestant monastery in which he lived with his family, as in a devout retreat, apportioning certain hours to prayer, reading and work. He was approved by Laud, who ordained him deacon, and visited and praised by Charles I. There is a modern and attractive description of this community, living piously and practising the highest principles, in J. H. Shorthouse's mystical novel, *John Inglesant*. It had something in common with the French Port-Royal, but while Port-Royal was Catholic in an austere spirit akin to Calvinism, Little Gidding, in a Protestant country, almost yearned for the Roman tradition which it attempted, a little romantically, to revive. The community was abolished by Parliament in 1646. Ferrar's books—he died in 1637—were destroyed and his house and church pillaged.

The spirit of gentleness and poetry by which such as Herbert and Ferrar were animated recurs in the work of the great Anglican preacher of the middle of this century, Jeremy Taylor (1613-67), who has been called the Shakespeare and the Spenser of the pulpit, the English Chrysostom and the most eloquent of theologians. He distinguished himself as a preacher as early as 1634, when he left Cambridge, was patronised by Laud and became chaplain-in-ordinary to Charles I. As chaplain of the royal army during the Civil War he was made prisoner and deprived of his benefices. He retired to Wales, where, to secure a livelihood, he founded a school. The Restoration brought him the Irish bishopric of Dromore, and so many cares and controversies as accompaniments to the episcopal dignity that he sighed for a country living. He was obliged to expel thirty-one clergymen who were refractory to the Episcopalian order, and his

liberality and kindliness made the necessity for persecution really painful to him.

The misfortunes of their Church had indeed turned the Anglicans into champions of religious liberty. After hunting down Catholics and Puritans for fifty years, and severely prohibiting Puritans from preaching, they were now demanding toleration. Taylor became their mouthpiece, without recantation, for he was tolerant by nature. This characteristic gives its high value to his great treatise *A Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying with its just limits and temper, showing the unreasonableness of prescribing to other men's faith and the iniquity of persecuting differing opinions* (1646). He founds his argument on the difficulty of interpreting Scripture and on the fallibility of councils and theologians. Save that he insists that the Creed must be upheld, he is tolerant to a degree which in this age might well seem absolute. His other great works are *Holy Living and Holy Dying* (1650). But his numerous sermons rank above his books.

They are distinguished less by logic than by imagination—an imagination fed by copious reading and by an extensive classical culture on which he constantly drew, and animated by his charmed contemplation of nature. Taylor is a prose poet, and as a poet is closely akin to the great Elizabethans. He conceives an imaginative interest in the objects he describes, although he is first directed to them only by the desire to render his thought clear and concrete. As he follows up his similes and develops them, he sometimes recalls the fancy or even the slightly mannered ingenuity of the poets of the Renascence. The idea of a rose induces him to paint it in detail, that of the sunrise to describe its successive phases. It happens to him to say that prayer rises like a lark, and thereupon he gives himself free rein:

> For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motions made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighing of his wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air, about his ministries here below: so is the prayer of a good man.

No poet could have better observed the bird soaring heavenward or described it with more sympathetic emotion. Such *bravura* passages could be extracted from many of Taylor's pages. They impart a charming grace and freshness, but the preacher who voices them may be accused of lingering on the path of duty to play and cull flowers. They rob his eloquence of some force of urgency. The logician is obscured by the artist.

Yet at times Taylor is forceful and great, as in the magnificent passage in which he shows death to be easy and simple, if but it be shorn of its pomp and "solemn bugbears."

It is the same harmless thing that a poor shepherd suffered yesterday, or a maid-servant to-day; and at the same time in which you die, in that very night a thousand creatures die with you, some wise men, and many fools; and the wisdom of the first will not quit him, and the folly of the last does not make him unable to die.

Taylor was, moreover, not only an observer of inanimate nature, but also a psychologist of great delicacy who knew the heart of man. No one else has spoken of the love between husband and wife, its frailty soon after marriage and the strength it acquires by mutual trials, with as much insight and poetry as this clergyman in his sermon on the marriage-ring.

A delightful anthology can be compiled from his work. His prose is the most varied in tone and the most modern of his time. He had his share of the seductive gift. He had a broad sympathy for nature, human and other, and to this he added a taste for reading the profane authors of antiquity. He quotes Petronius and the Anthology neither pedantically nor apologetically but spontaneously, because some anecdote or line of poetry has enriched his memory. He is a proof that the best of the clergy had absorbed the culture of the Renascence and become the depositories of literary and poetic sensibility. Henceforward it is possible to regard their rôle as enlightened purveyors of civilisation confidently and hopefully, whether they occupy an episcopal see or their lot be cast in a humble parish.

Many other names [1] would have to be added to those already

[1] Thomas Traherne, *Centuries of Meditations*, ed. Dobell (1908); John Hales, *Works*, ed. Dalrymple, 3 vols. (1765); W. Chillingworth, *Works, Oxford* (1838); *Eikon Basilike*, ed. Phillimore (1879; reprint by E. Scott, 1880); P. Heylyn, *Ecclesia Restaurata*, ed J. C. Robertson (1849).

cited in order to give a just idea of Anglican activity in these years. Religious prose was enriched by the sermons of Robert Sanderson; by the penetrating mysticism of Thomas Traherne's *Centuries of Meditations,* available only in manuscript form until they were recently published together with his remarkable verses; by the biblical criticism and pure and simple sermons of Henry Hammond; by John Hales's *Golden Remains;* and by a *History of the Reformation* (1661) by Peter Heylyn, an aggressive and acrimonious controversialist who also wrote a history (published in 1656) of his travels in 1625 in France, a work without sympathy for the people described, but pungent and picturesque. William Chillingworth's *Religion of Protestants* (1638) made more noise, as did, in 1649, the famous *Eikon Basilike, the Portraiture of His Sacred Majesty in his solitudes and sufferings.* This last book, probably the work of John Gauden, purports to be written by Charles I. himself. It made a martyr of this king and crowned the house of Stuart with an aureole. It is famous both on its merits and on account of the answers it provoked.

4. *The Puritans. Baxter and Milton.*—The Puritans were no less active than the Anglicans. On the whole, it was they who from the beginning took the offensive. Violence and even trivial coarseness marked their pamphlets in the reign of Elizabeth and figured also in Prynne's exposition of the case against the theatres, his *Histriomastix* of 1632, in many attacks on episcopacy and, above all, in several of Milton's treatises. While Anglican prose was generally characterised by suavity and unction, Puritan prose was predominantly harsh. Jeremy Taylor and Milton present, in this respect, a typical antithesis. But an exception must be made in favour of moderate Presbyterians, like the five writers who signed their anti-Episcopalian treatise by the name Smectymnuus, made up of their combined initials. Their group was headed by Stephen Marshall (1594-1655) and Edmund Calamy (1600-66), who were dignified in controversy. The same moderation distinguishes the considerable works of Richard Baxter (1615-91),[1] the most prolific of the prose-writers, whose *Saints' Rest* (1650) is a classic of religious literature, and whose *Reliquiæ* is an inexhaustible mine of information on the ecclesiastical history of the period. His simple style is neither brilliant nor nervous, yet much superior to that of his contempo-

[1] R. Baxter's Works, ed. by Rogers, 4 vols. (1868).

rary, John Owen (1616-83), who has been called the greatest of the Puritan theologians, but is in truth a writer of diffuse and unattractive prose.

The controversy gives the impression that the Puritans conducted it with violence and fierceness because of the extent to which it is dominated by Milton's[1] genius. The numerous pamphlets in English which the great poet composed in his middle age, from 1641 to 1660, form the most extraordinary monument of the prose of the middle seventeenth century. A study of his contemporaries proves these treatises to be characteristic rather of the man than of his time, but very great writers are privileged to set their mark on their age, and to think of Puritan literature is at once to remember the name and work of Milton.

His case is peculiar. He was a poet, believing profoundly in his destiny as a poet and despising prose, when he deemed it his duty to leave the studies properly his on one side and to plunge into the thick of the fight, where he remained until its conclusion. Before this episode he rhymed *L'Allegro*, after it he sang *Paradise Lost*. But between the ages of thirty and fifty he gave up verse almost entirely, which meant to him that he renounced his glory. His descent into "the cool element of prose" was the greatest sacrifice he could make to his cause. "I should not," he says, "choose this manner of writing, wherein, knowing myself inferior to myself, led by the genial power of nature to another task, I have the use, as I may account, but of my left hand."

The change was painful as a mutilation to this incomparable artist in verse. The strong force of lyricism which was in him troubled the style of his pamphlets, when it was no longer contained by art, and made his prose unique and very curious, its faults as excessive as its beauties.

The pamphlets, each consequent on an incident of the political and religious struggle, have a narrow and special character. Their subjects are often out of date, so little interesting to the modern reader that they would be neglected were it not that they

[1] Complete works of J. Milton, ed. Mitford, 8 vols. (1851); prose works, ed Symmons (1806); ed. Griswold, 2 vols. (1847); selected prose, ed Garnett (1893) See D. Masson, *Life of John Milton*, 6 vols. (1859-80); and in French, A. Geffroy, *Étude sur les pamphlets politiques et religieux de Milton* (1848); P Chauvet, *La Religion de Milton* (1909); D. Saurat, *La Pensée de Milton* (1921).

Continent was important, he replied to the learned Saumaise's *Defensio regii* by his Latin *Defensio pro populo Anglicano*, and to Peter du Moulin's attack, *Regii Sanguinis clamor ad cœlum adversus Parricidas anglicanos*, by his *Defensio secunda*, which was followed by other pamphlets.

At the end of the Commonwealth period he returned to English in order once more to claim liberty of conscience, to demand the suppression of an established and endowed Church and to protest against the reinstatement of the monarchy. The Restoration put a stop to his polemical career. But he accomplished other prose work during his life, wrote a *Treatise on Education* in 1644 and published a *History of England* in 1670 and a *Brief History of Moscovia*. He also left among his papers a curious Latin manuscript, *De Doctrina Christiana*, in which his own bold and heterodox ideas on Christianity and morality are exposed. He reveals himself an Arian, hostile to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and recommends polygamy.

Large as is the part of prose in his literary productions, he regarded it always as an inferior instrument, useful for practical ends and in controversy. His prose is the improvisation of a humanist, who reserves his art for his verse and is therefore careless of the shape and limits of his sentences. It makes formidable reading. It is best understood when it is read aloud, so that the inflections of spoken words can be followed, as though they had not been confided to print. Yet the troubled vehemence leaves room, here and there, for admirable images and for powerful sarcasm, provoked by enthusiasm or anger. Moreover, Milton constantly reveals himself in his prose. We see the impetuous idealist, scorning the immediate and the real, building up a religion and a republic which might have existed only if all men had been like himself, cut to his measure. He was unquestionably a Puritan, but his outlook is so personal that he often expresses the opinions of no group and is representative only of himself.

5. *The Eccentrics. Urquhart, Fuller, Walton.*—A certain number of the prose-writers of the middle seventeenth century are difficult to class, because of their subjects and of something individual or even eccentric in their manner. There was as yet no literary norm and fancy still had free play.

The most singular of them is certainly the Scot, Sir Thomas

Urquhart of Cromarty (1611-60),[1] whose original writings are examples of pedantry, wordiness and grandiloquence, and also of such vanity and vaingloriousness as cannot easily be matched. Their mere titles are stupefying—*The Trissotetras, Pantochronocanon, Ekskubalauron, Logopandecteision*—and words no less formidable swarm in their text. Urquhart had, however, the happy idea of employing his verbal vigour on the translation of Rabelais (1653), and the result was something like a masterpiece—not an exact rendering, but an adaptation which keeps the spirit of the original while the author improves on his model and gaily multiplies the synonyms and epithets of which Rabelais had already been prodigal. Like Rabelais, he makes use of every form of speech—archaisms and neologisms, jargon and slang.

Thomas Fuller (1608-61)[2] is predominantly witty and pointed. This Anglican clergyman, who served the Royalist cause and wrote the *Church History of Britain* (1655), must yet be placed rather among the antiquaries or the moralists than among the ecclesiastical writers. Of his books, *The Holy State and the Profane State* (1642) and the *Worthies* (1661) are most read. The former presents a [illegible] positions—a good father, a [illegible] good yeoman and others—[illegible] *Worthies* gives, in the author's fantastic manner, much information about distinguished Englishmen and their birthplaces. It is thanks to Fuller that many significant anecdotes have been preserved, and, although he has collected much gossip, he also shows, in his more specially historical works, a critical understanding of documents which inspires confidence.

An amiable optimism illumines his style, and his love of conceits gives it relief and connects him with the so-called "metaphysical" poets of his generation. Many of his definitions are still celebrated, for instance that of the good yeoman, who "is a gentleman in ore, whom the next age may see refined; and is the wax capable of a gentle impression, when the prince shall stamp it"; and that of a negro, the image of God "cut in ebony," and

[1] Works edited for the Maitland Club (1834).

[2] T. Fuller, *Church History of Britain*, ed. Brewer, 6 vols. (1845-8); *The History of the Worthies of England* (reprinted 1840); *Collected Sermons*, ed. Bailey and Axon, 2 vols. (1891); *Good Thoughts in Bad Times, etc*, ed Waller (1902). See also M. Fuller, *Life, Times and Writings of T. Fuller*, 2 vols. (1884); C. Lamb, *Specimens from the Writings of T. Fuller*, in L. Hutchinson's ed. of Lamb, vol. i. pp. 142-50.

also his saying that "the soldier at the same time shoots out his prayer to God and his pistol at his enemy." Fuller often sacrifices complete accuracy to pointedness, but in this he has, after all, no other object than to keep the reader alertly attentive to his wise and humane counsels on morality.

No figure in the literature of the period is, however, more endearing than the one still the most popular, Izaak Walton (1593-1683),[1] who is outside all the categories. His long life prolonged the Elizabethan age to the Restoration. He is a link between Marlowe and Dryden. Almost without literary education and never intended for a writer, he long kept an ironmonger's shop in Fleet Street. But even so he was attracted by the intellectuals. He was the parishioner and humble friend of John Donne, knew Drayton and Ben Jonson, often went fishing with the scholarly ambassador Wotton, and was frequently in the society of the wits and also, since he was a good Anglican, of the divines. All his life he kept a love for poetry such as he knew in his youth, for its mingled grace, strangeness and artifice, and more than once he inserts verse in his simple and homely prose. In 1640 he had written his life of Donne, but it was mainly during the leisure he enjoyed after he retired from trade in 1643 that he developed a taste for relating his impressions and memories.

He is a delightful biographer. To his life of Donne he added those of Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker and George Herbert, all of which were collected in one volume in 1670. Their charm is partly due to the fact that Walton wrote lives only of men for whom he had a liking and with whom he was to some extent familiar. He was, indeed, a mere child when Hooker died, but he had ties with those who knew the great divine well. Nor had he ever more than a glimpse of Herbert, but the two had friends in common. Thus it is that all Walton's biographies have a charm of intimacy. He had, moreover, heartiness and simplicity of soul; he was cheerful, good-natured and shrewd; and his books derive from his personality an exquisite fragrance. His writing is fitted to give the highest

[1] *The Compleat Angler*, ed. A. Lang (1896), Le Gallienne (1897), Buchan (1901), etc.; *The Lives of Donne, Wotton, Hooker, George Herbert*, ed. Bullen 1884), A. Dobson, in 2 vols. (1898). See also S. Martin, *Izaak Walton and His Friends* (1904).

pleasure. The question has been raised whether his style be merely his natural form of expression or whether a concealed art, a hidden laboriousness, should be discerned in it. He had had no regular education, but he had trained himself by reading and by conversation with men of letters, even refined men of letters, whom he had known in his youth. It was his singular good fortune to love their mannerism and not to be infected by it. A very lively inclination took him to the poets and he was, in his hour, a poet himself. In *The Compleat Angler* we see him trying to recall songs which once had pleased him. When memory fails, when a verse escapes him, he puts down his rod and, reclining on the grass, spends an hour on remaking the forgotten lines. His invention and his memory collaborate.

It is for reasons of this kind that the style and the narratives of his lives are so attractive. Quietly, a little slowly, always clearly although not in accordance with any strict order, he relates facts which he has conscientiously verified and impressive particulars which without him would never have reached us. Without him, we should hardly know the characters of the eminent men of whom he speaks, and the loss to us would be great. It is, however, he himself, with his gentle religion and serene philosophy, who even here interests us most.

His optimism is even more apparent in his *Compleat Angler*, which has become a classic. Few books of this time have gone through as many editions and are more read and as much loved to-day. Walton put into it not only his large experience of fishing, but also the reflection of his nature and the secret of his happiness. It is perhaps the only handbook of an art or craft which ranks as literature, and it seems to have won its place without seeking it.

The respectable pleasure which Walton takes in fishing turns into universal optimism and thanksgiving to God for the benefits lavished on the earth. How easily a wholesome and delightful life can be led on the banks of a cool "gliding stream" on fine summer days! What madness to join in the rush for money or pleasure! How perfect life would be if all men were anglers and had anglers' souls! Everyone else seems to be obstinately shunning the only true joys to be had here below.

It should be noted that this book appeared in 1653, on the

morrow of the civil war, when the country laboured under Cromwell's yoke and all Walton's friends were in the camp of the vanquished. He was sixty years old; he had lost his first wife and the seven children she had borne him. But public and private ills left no trace on the angler's smiling spirit, any more than the tortures he inflicted on the poor frogs he used as bait altered his benign countenance or modified the unction of his advice to his pupil. His joy in life was even distilled into kind words concerning those small victimised reptiles.

Walton was, but for this, the best fellow in the world. His joy was always inspired by love for the fields and the streams or by the rhymes which sang in his memory, and it was accompanied by a strong preference for decency in which there was no taint of sullen prudery. We can understand his attraction for the huntsman whom he met accidentally and converted to his ruling passion, winning him from the more brutal joys of his own form of sport, and to whom he passed on his morality, that of a man as averse from austerity as from gross self-indulgence.

This book, which has the form of a dialogue between the angler and his pupil, is a transformed pastoral. Here and there the factitious element in the older pastorals subsists, and can be recognised in some entirely poetic locutions, but these are excusable on the lips of an old man mindful of the ornate expressions which charmed his adolescence. Elsewhere all is agreeable realism, the simple painting of an English countryside, its meadows and streams, its clean inns where the fare is excellent and the streets smell of lavender. The book is good-humoured as a holiday in the open air.

The excellent Walton, sincerely pious and moral, makes it his duty to savour the good things of this world in order to do homage for them to the Creator. His sensuousness is unctuous and purified. He enjoys the air, the aspects of the sky and the land, the sunlight and the warm summer showers. His greed is well-behaved and moderate, but its very moderation is like supreme epicureanism. He loves verses and songs and likes them to be fanciful. By his origins he belongs to Merry England, and he made its spirit survive into the gloomiest and most morose period of English history. He kept for himself a fresh and

sweet retreat from the political storms. He was no hero, but a sage endowed by Fate with a lively taste for nature, a grateful soul and an excellent stomach.

6. *Other Writers of Prose.*—The middle seventeenth century can claim other prose works in several genres. England, later than France, produced memoirs: the *Autobiography* of Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1588-1648), who also wrote a history of Henry VIII.; and the *Memoirs* of Sir Kenelm Digby (1603-65), which were in manuscript form until 1827, and in which real adventures are curiously disguised by fictitious names, so that they have a resemblance to a Scudéry novel. The period with which they deal, if not the date at which they were compiled, would cause the addition to this list of the Puritan *Life of Colonel Hutchinson,* by his wife, and the Royalist *Life of the Duke of Newcastle,* by his second wife. Both these works are studied in a later chapter of this history, as is Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion,* which is famous for its portraits Two considerable men are also assigned to our next volume—Hobbes, the philosopher, and Bunyan, the Puritan allegorist. Here we have only to mark the wealth of the period which is our subject by naming the writers who belong to the two periods. It should, however, be stated that one of the strongest replies to Hobbes's *Leviathan* was from the pen of the Puritan James Harrington (1611-77), who in his *Oceana*, published in 1656, proposed a republican Utopia in opposition to the absolute monarchy advocated by Hobbes. But Harrington's political romance lacks the imaginative qualities proper to its genre, those which Thomas More could so brilliantly impart. Moreover, although it is full of the reflections of an experienced and sagacious man, its style is dull, and it has not the astonishing structural force and verbal exactness which made Hobbes a precursor and a pioneer of modern prose.

This period could also lay claim to the learned John Selden (1584-1654), whose legal treatises are almost all in Latin, but whose table-talk, collected and published by his secretary in 1689, long after his death, delighted the classical age with its abundant good sense and occasional discreet irony. The Civil War also synchronised with the beginning of the career of Henry More (1614-87), the most celebrated of the Cambridge Platonists. He

wrote, first in verse and then in prose and both in English and in Latin, a series of works which bear the imprint of a dreamy mysticism not far removed from occultism, and are accessible only to the few initiate, so that they are in contrast to the practical and earthbound literature of the age in which the author ended his life.

CHAPTER II

POETRY FROM 1625 TO 1660

1. *Long Poems which were Failures.*—At the death of James I., in 1625, Spenser's influence was almost exhausted, surviving only in Milton. It was Ben Jonson and especially John Donne who now had disciples and imitators. Poets were numerous down to the Restoration, but, except for Milton, they were the poets of the anthologies whose memory lives only in slight lyrics or collections of small poems.[1] The ambition to write works on a vast scale had not died out, but the efforts to realise it were failures. The epical ambition which was then common to Europe, and which produced more than one pitifully abortive poem in France, was no more successful in England. Long romances in verse and attempts at classical epics constitute what is dead in the literature of the time: their titles and the names of almost all their authors are forgotten. They have been collected only by the historical zeal of the present day,[2] and to name them will sufficiently show how abundant was the unfortunate production in this genre.

They consist of metrical romances, like Patrick Hannay's *Sheratine and Mariana* (1622), the *Leoline and Sydanis* (1642) of Sir Francis Kynaston, who had previously modernised Chaucer's *Troylus and Criseyde,* and W. Chamberlayne's *Pharonnida,* in six books (1659). There are also mythological narratives: Shackerley Marmion's *Cupid and Psyche* (1637) and William Bosworth's *Arcadius and Sepha* (1651); long religious narratives like Edward Benlowes's *Theophila,* in nine cantos (1652), and epics like d'Avenant's *Gondibert* (1650), which is in quat-

[1] E. Gosse, *Seventeenth Century Studies* (1883); B. Wendell, *The Seventeenth Century in English Literature* (1904).
Collections of verse: *Cavalier and Courtier Lyrists* (Canterbury Poets, 1891); G. Saintsbury, *Seventeenth Century Lyrists* (undated); H. J. Massingham, *A Treasury of Seventeenth Century English Verse* (1919), H. J. C. Grierson, *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century* (1921).

[2] *Minor Poets of the Caroline Period*, ed Saintsbury, 3 vols. (Clarendon Press, 1906-21).

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[1] E. Gosse, *Seventeenth Century Studies* (1883); B. Wendell, *The Seventeenth* [illegible]

[illegible] Canterbury Poets, 1891), [illegible] H. J. Massingham, *A* [illegible] H. J. C. Grierson, *Meta-* [illegible] 921). [illegible] vols. (Clarendon Press, 1906-21).

rains, and Cowley's *Davideis* (1656), which is classical in manner and has a Hebrew theme.

Inevitably poetic qualities and readable passages are scattered here and there in these ambitious works, but on the whole they were stillborn, and have no importance in literary history save that a path leads over their graves to Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

If dead poetry be left on one side, and the attempt be then made to classify the poets of the middle seventeenth century, they are seen to fall into two main groups, separated by the differences which make the history of this troubled period. There are first the secular poets, all in the Royalist ranks and therefore known as Cavaliers, and secondly there are religious poets, subdivided into the Anglicans and the Puritans. The division is social rather than literary, but it is simple and convenient, and corresponds sufficiently to the diversity of inspiration.

2. *Thomas Carew (1598?-1639).*[1]—The poet who first, before the Civil War, showed what the spirit of the Cavaliers was to be, and first was affected by the combined influence of Jonson and Donne, was Thomas Carew, a gentleman of the court of Charles I. who was a reputed wit. He was a courtly and polished love-poet whom his rivals suspected of working long at his elegant verses. The logical good order of the classicists rules his mind even when, in his poems to Celia, he returns to a theme of the Petrarchists. He can isolate a thought, follow it up faithfully and balance its several parts, and many of his light sets of verses have won, in consequence, a place in anthologies. He has little sensibility—he had indeed a reputation for dryness—but his sensuous ardour enables him to avoid the coldness of gallantry. Such, in any case, is the character betrayed by his longest poem and his masterpiece, *The Rapture,* unfortunately no less indecent than the verses of Aretino. It is an invitation to Celia to flout "the Giant Honour" and enjoy forbidden pleasures without scruple. The Paradise he paints to her is one of the most licentious even of those inspired by the Italian Renascence. His attack on honour recalls Sidney's *Astrophel* and especially Donne's *Elegies.* He is also inspired by the speeches of Petronius in the anonymous tragedy *Nero* (Act IV. scene vii.), but in libertine audacity he outdoes his models.

[1] *Poems of T. Carew,* ed. Ebsworth (1893); ed. Vincent (1899); also in The Muses' Library.

Carew is connected with Donne by the fine elegy with which he honoured his memory. The poem has more feeling than is customary with Carew and is, moreover, one of the best pieces of criticism written in this period. No one has pointed out more accurately than Carew what was new in Donne, his contempt for outworn ornament and his need of personal and virile expression. Yet Donne left few traces upon his style. If Carew has none of the master's flashes of genius, he escapes the worst faults of his style. In his commendatory verses he shows that his thought was vigorous and direct, especially in those to George Sandys, who, after translating Ovid, gave up secular poetry and translated the Psalms. Carew confesses that he dare not greet "the holy place with his unhallowed feet," but that his Muse, like "devout penitents of old," stays "humbly waiting at the porch," listening to the sacred strains. Yet he thinks that one day his eyes,

> Now hunting glow-worms, may adore the sun,

and that:

> My eyes in penitential dew may steep
> That brine which they for sensual love did weep.

The poem is beautiful, and so restrained that it seems sincere. It is consistent with Clarendon's account of the poet's edifying death.

His was, however, a death-bed conversion. All his poetry is the work of an amorist, such as Milton despised. He writes "persuasions" to love, madrigals, complaints and reproaches, addressed to a mistress, lines to his "inconstant mistress," who shall be "damned for her false apostasy," to Celia singing, to Celia when he sends her red and white roses:

> *In the white you may discover*
> *The paleness of a fainting lover,*
> *In the red, the flames still feeding*
> *On my heart with fresh wounds bleeding.*

In the famous song, "Ask me no more," he finds all the beauties of nature united in his mistress—the rose of June:

> For in your beauties, orient deep,
> These flowers, as in their causes, sleep;

the "golden atoms of the day" which "enrich her hair," the nightingale's song:

For in your warm, dividing throat,
She winters, and keeps warm her note.

The theme is commonplace, but in the harmonious quatrains of this song it is turned with perfect elegance.

Carew's work is slight, much distilled, but some warmth of imagination and a certain fancy temper its coldness. The style and the versification are so polished that Waller and Denham, the acknowledged pioneers of the classical school, could hardly improve on them.

3. *The Cavalier Poets.*—Carew is the typical poet. Sir John Suckling (1609-42)[1] typifies the Cavaliers, their loyalty, dash, petulancy, frivolity, easy morals and wit. Rich, spendthrift, valiant, a gamester and a gallant, an amateur of the drama who wrote four not unsuccessful plays and a faithful admirer of Shakespeare, Suckling mocked at the pains which Carew took to polish his verses. He was himself an improviser, one whose work is very unequal but who writes with irresistible swing. It is his light, impertinent tone which characterises him. He recalls Donne when he rallies woman on her capriciousness or himself on his inconstancy; but while he has the master's hyperbole he leaves his metaphysics alone. He discharges his mockery in the form of little, swiftly moving, neatly turned songs, irony sometimes hiding the madrigal, as in "Out upon it." His ease and flippancy are French rather than English, and it has been thought that a sojourn which he made in France before he was twenty influenced his Muse. Less slight than the rest of his work is the *Ballad upon a Wedding* in which a farmer describes, in picturesque language, a wedding at which he has been present. Here there are many lively and homely descriptive touches, as well as wit and spirit. Suckling puts new life and freshness into the conventional epithalamium. Not until Thomas Moore did anyone else show such skill at writing charming verses about nothing. "Natural, easy Suckling," as Congreve's Millamant calls him, whose life was short and who versified only as a pastime, had a considerable production. Beneath his apparent frivolity there was, as his poems prove, romantic generosity, and even, as his letter to Henry Jermyn shows, a power of reflecting on politics. His treatise *An Account of Religion by Reason,*

[1] *Poems, Plays and Other Remains of Sir John Suckling,* ed. Hazlitt, 2 vols. (1892); *The Works of Sir John Suckling,* ed. Thompson (1910).



Sir John Suckling

For in your warm, dividing throat,
She winters, and keeps warm her note.

The theme is commonplace, but in the harmonious quatrains of this song it is turned with perfect elegance.

Carew's work is slight, much distilled, but some warmth of imagination and a certain fancy temper its coldness. The style and the versification are so polished that Waller and Denham, the acknowledged pioneers of the classical school, could hardly improve on them.

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Sir John Suckling.

in which he combats the Socinian heresies, is proof that he also cared for religion. The contrasts in him are characteristic of a time in which libertinage often rubbed shoulders with piety.

Richard Lovelace (1618-58)[1] was neither as correct as Carew nor as natural as Suckling. This most handsome Cavalier whose figure fascinated the ladies, this faithful follower of the king who was twice imprisoned and finally ruined for the cause, so that he ended his short life in the most abject poverty, was a very unequal poet. In his *Lucasta* (1649) the cold, hyperbolical compliments of the degenerate sonneteers occur side by side with Donne's obscure extravagance. The lack of art in his work is as apparent as its mannerisms, and almost all of it has been forgotten. But it was his fortune to make two or three songs in which his sense of honour is in manly alliance with his love. It was he who wrote to Althea from prison:

Stone walls do not a prison make
  Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
  That for an hermitage.
If I have freedom in my love,
  And in my soul am free,
Angels alone that soar above
  Enjoy such liberty

It was he who wrote "to Lucasta on going to the wars,"

I could not love thee, dear, so much,
  Loved I not honour more.

Because of these few short poems, Lovelace has the glory of having expressed the ideal of the Cavalier.

He shares it with Montrose (1612-50), the noble Scottish champion of Charles I, whose brilliant victories were followed by [illegible]ter, death and quartering, if the Royalist hero of Scotland who wrote the fine loyalist verses attributed to him.

[illegible] Cleveland (1613-58),[2] a Royalist like these other poets, [illegible]like them, was of humble origin, was very different from [illegible]. He was, above all, a satirist, and he enjoyed in his own [illegible] a popularity which his vigour and his wit deserved. But [illegible]less slight topical allusions make him difficult to read

[1] [illegible], ed. Hazlitt (2nd ed., 1897).
[2] [illegible] Saintsbury in *Minor Poets of the Caro[illegible]* vol. iii; *The [illegible]* [illegible] Cleveland, ed. Berdan (1911).

to-day. He was, moreover, one of Donne's most determined imitators, and conceits abound in his poems. The best known of them is the *Rebel Scot*, a fiery attack on the nation which had just delivered Charles I. to the Parliament. This satirist, with his rude style, often, while turning an epigram, wrote such isolated couplets as Dryden affected, and in spite of his metaphysical strangeness he blazed the track of political satire for that poet. He did not, however, write only satires. He compased love-poetry in which a touch of real nature varies, from time to time, the extravagant gallantry, and he made some curious lyrical essays in which he was one of the first of poets to realise the value of the anapæst.

It is tempting to connect Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648),[1] George Herbert's elder brother, with these Royalist poets. He is, because of his curious *Autobiography*, better known for his prose than for his verses, which contain a subtle quintessence of poetry. His handsome person, his extravagant valour, his passion for duelling and his refined gallantry, made him a representative Cavalier, and his *Ode upon a Question moved, whether Love should continue for ever*, gives him a high place among the Petrarchists and the disciples of Sir Philip Sidney.

4. *Robert Herrick.*—Midway between the Cavaliers and the Anglicans, Robert Herrick (1591-1674),[2] the most gifted and the most exquisite of all these poets, has place. The anacreonticism of the poetry of his youth makes him one of the Cavaliers, and since, at the age of thirty-eight, he accepted a Devonshire living and did his best to convert his Muse, he is also to be numbered among the Anglicans. His only collection of poems, the *Hesperides*, published in 1648, contains his "works both human and divine." The former consist of 1,129 short sets of verses, the latter of only 271, and the proportion may be taken to be that in which his inspiration was secular and sacred.

[1] His poems were published by Collins in 1881, and were edited by G. C. Moore Smith for the Clarendon Press (*Poems English and Latin*) in 1923.
See Rémusat, *Herbert de Cherbury* (Paris, 1874).

[2] *Hesperides*, ed. by Pollard, with introduction by Swinburne, in the Muses' Library, 2 vols. (1891); by Saintsbury in the Aldine Poets Series, 2 vols. (1893); by Rhys in the Everyman's Library (1908); by F. W. Moorman (1921).
See F. W. Moorman, *Robert Herrick, a Biographical and Critical Study* (1910); F. Delattre, *Contribution à l'étude de la poésie anglaise au XVIIe siècle* (1910; the capital work on Herrick).

This son of a London goldsmith, who from Cambridge returned to London and a life of dissipation, who in the reign of James I., while his youth lasted, was a frequenter of the literary taverns, this lover of wine, women and song, and "son" of Ben Jonson, was induced to take orders only for the sake of a livelihood. When he bade a sad farewell to London and his Muse and departed to his living of Dean Prior, in Devonshire, he resolved, like a man of honour, to be a good parson. But he had no enthusiasm for his new duties. The change was *too great for this charming rhymester cast up among the savages.* He petted both his Muse and a few of his female parishioners. Then, little by little, helped by his recollections of pastorals, he acquired a taste for the rich countryside in which he found himself and for the uses of rustic life. He became attached also to his church and his little vicarage; he trusted in the good people's God, to whose infinite indulgence he could leave the frolics of his youth and certain lapses of his maturity, whose anger would not be roused because the very secular *Hesperides* were printed side by side with the *Holy Numbers.* "Jocund his Muse was, but his life was chaste," he said of himself. It was self-flattery. His portrait at the beginning of the *Hesperides* shows a torso like that of a merry Priapus, a sensuous, mocking mouth beneath an aquiline nose, a head bristling with crisp, luxuriant hair, a chest left bare. This is a real pagan from a garden where Cupids dance in a ring, while Pegasus, standing on a hillock, is poised for flight.

Herrick's works are by themselves an anthology, a collection of short poems brought together on no principle and without any order. He adopts "sweet disorder" as an æsthetic principle, loves it in poetry as much as in women's dress. He goes further and mingles the coarsest epigrams with poetry that is winged and delicate. Every contradiction of his mobile spirit, all his fleeting feelings and thoughts, are grouped haphazard. Even his "many dainty mistresses" sometimes clash, and we can only hope that, if they were real, they were successive. He hates monotony, sharing the national craving for variety so conspicuous in the drama. He alternates the pretty with the ugly, the fragrant with the evil-smelling. But nothing really counts in his work except its exquisite qualities, which exist in profusion.

On occasion, Herrick was capable of sustained effort. He

has some epithalamiums and some rustic pieces, like the *Hock Cart, or Harvest Home,* which have spirit and savour. One of the most famous of his poems is *Corinna's Going A-Maying,* which contains five fourteen-lined stanzas. It is among the most charming of songs of the dawn, fragrant with flowers, rich as a poem by Spenser, and it has the merest hint of the ingenious fancy of the metaphysical poets:

> Rise, and *put on your foliage,* and be seen
> To come forth, like the Spring-time, fresh and green
>   And sweet as Flora.

This poem has become the classic of all the English songs on May.

But Herrick's truest imprint is on the multitude of his tiny poems which seem to be made of a breath of air—charming madrigals, love-fancies, addresses to flowers, brief epitaphs. The light joy of a frivolous heart, a fancy pleased by whatever has grace or beauty; the slender melancholy of a reveller who remembers how ephemeral is that which charms him: such are his moods, and to the latter of them he returns again and again as he watches the flowers in his garden—the roses, the daffodils, the blossoms of the fruit-trees, the meadows which "have been fresh and green" and are left "to lament." The essence of this mood is in a trifle about cherry-blossom:

> Ye may simper, blush and smile,
> And perfume the air awhile;
> But, sweet things, ye must be gone,
> Fruit, ye know, is coming on;
> Then, ah! then, where is your grace,
> Whenas cherries come in place?

Never again did a poet of the West have so light a touch. The secret seems to be kept by Japan or China.

His epitaphs are endlessly graceful. They do not weigh down the graves on which they are but poised with the delicate grace of flowers, for instance that upon a child:

> Virgins promised when I died
> That they would each primrose-tide
> Duly, morn and evening, come,
> And with flowers dress my tomb.
> Having promised, pay your debts,
> Maids, and here strew violets.

When this voluptuary was in bed with fever he called on music to dispel his pain:

> Then make me weep
> My pains asleep;
> And give me such reposes
> That I, poor I,
> May think thereby
> I live and die
> 'Mongst roses.

Everywhere his simplicity is seasoned with a strangeness—Mad Maid's Song, Grace for a Child, A Night Piece for Julia. He is inspired by the Anthology and by Jonson, who had made fine translations from it; but while Jonson took extreme pains, Herrick seems to sing spontaneously. He can be reminiscent, recalling Marlowe's pastoral or Shakespeare's fairies or Herbert's pious verses, but whatever he takes is transposed and lightened. He reverses La Fontaine's otherwise just verdict on the English, that they "think profoundly." Herrick thinks, feels and writes lightly. He touches nothing; he barely skims its surface. For he was without moral sense. He knew only delicate enjoyment, neither satiety, passion nor remorse. He is the most epicurean of the moderns. His life, in the time of the Civil War and so near to Milton, seems a defiance. His metres, fluid as water, and his delicately varied stanzas, are surprising in their proximity to regularised verse, to the couplet which Waller and Denham fixed and stabilised and which increasingly became the vehicle of didacticism. Herrick, born in the Elizabethan age, was in the succeeding period the perfect artist in slight verse, while Milton, with his sovereign art, reigned over grander poetry.

5. *The Anglican and Catholic Poets.*—Herrick, a pagan clergyman, represents no more than the lax Anglicanism of his time. The renewal of faith within the Catholic Church, provoked by the Protestant attacks, had its counterpart in England in the revived fervour of the Anglican clergy whom the Presbyterians attacked. We have seen the effects of their stimulated zeal on the prose of preachers and controversialists, and it also left its mark on poetry. Hooker had exemplified Anglican weightiness and the Anglican grasp of political principles. In the seventeenth century the ardour of many Anglicans reached even to

mysticism. The pious fervour shown under James I. by the brothers Phineas and Giles Fletcher became widespread under Charles I. and during the persecutions of the Commonwealth. Reason became the ally, sometimes the subordinate, of imagination and sentiment. Fancy and a certain singularity were added to them, partly in consequence of the changed literary models. Poets were inspired no longer by Spenser but by Donne, whose influence was even more marked on the pious poets than on the Cavaliers.

The double tendency perceptible under Charles I. and during Laud's tenure of power, on the one hand towards the restoration of the religious practices, the material accompaniments and the very millinery of Catholic ritual, and on the other towards a renewal of monastic asceticism, was combined with a taste for the metaphysical element in the sometimes truly beautiful and always curious writings of such as Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan and Traherne.

(*a*) George Herbert (1593-1633).[1]—The most popular of Anglican poems is George Herbert's *The Temple* which appeared in the year after the author's death. The son of an admirable mother, whose "autumnal beauty" Donne celebrated, Herbert was the younger brother of the Lord Herbert of Cherbury who was a soldier, statesman, poet and deist philosopher. He had a brilliant career at Cambridge, won the affection of James I., and had already embarked on the life of a courtier and politician, when, at the age of thirty-seven, he took orders and became rector of Bemerton, in Wiltshire, where he died three years later. All his verses are the expression of his piety as a man and as a priest. *The Temple* is a singular work, full of faith and fervour and also of subtlety, ornament and point.

Herbert's theory is that a man should dedicate all his gifts to God's service, that a poet should make the altar blossom with his poetry. He was no Puritan, but valued the beauty and neatness of the church in which he officiated, and loved cheerfulness and the mirth which avoids coarseness:

> All things are big with jest; nothing that's plain
> But may be witty, if thou hast the vein.

[1] *The Complete Works of George Herbert*, ed. Grosart, 3 vols. (1874); *The English Works of George Herbert*, ed. G. H. Palmer, 3 vols. (1895; the best critical edition; new ed., 1920); Walton, *Life of George Herbert* (often reprinted); J. J. Daniel, *Life of George Herbert* (1893).

He offered up to God all that was graceful and ingenious in his mind. A most intelligent, sagacious and penetrating observer of himself and others, and a man of wit, learning and cultivation, he spared no means to inculcate his faith. His profound sincerity led him to detest sermons made up of solemnity and grandiloquence. He liked simple, homely, racy language. The queer subtlety of which he made too much use was natural to him, part of his very mind and the outcome of the unusual association of his ideas and sequence of his images. He is of all Donne's disciples the one most like him. He is the saint of the metaphysical school. His poetry frequently offends taste, but often gives the impression of a sort of sublimity.

Although he was passionately fond of music, and was wont to accompany himself on the lute or viol while he sang his own hymns, and although his metres are marvellously expert and varied—in almost every one of his poems there is a special combination of lines and rhymes, and to seek to make a list of his different stanzas is hopeless—the melody of his verses is not facile. Sometimes so closely packed as to be hard, they are usually nervous and original, the latter even to the point of the fantastic, and they are sharpened with humour, racy of the people and often aphoristic or proverbial in form.

Herbert's characteristic is that he expresses everything by imagery, endeavours above all else to be concrete. This constitutes his merit and also, because it sometimes leads him to dwarf an idea, a defect. Another of his defects is that he is subtle to the point of obscurity, strange to the point of the enigmatic.

The short and frequently quoted poem *Virtue* exemplifies both what is excellent and what is dubious in Herbert's accomplishment. The idea is that all fair things of the earth, the day, the rose's hue, the charm and music of the spring, must die, but that virtue lives though the whole world burn. While the cadence of the quatrains is perfect, certain of the images are surprising and disquieting. The "angry and brave" colour of the rose "bids the rash gazer wipe his eye"; spring is "a box where sweets compacted lie," and the virtuous soul, "like seasoned timber, never gives."

But Herbert could do better than this. The lines of his *Elixir* are deservedly included among current quotations.

For Herbert the true elixir, the stone "that turneth all to gold," is:

In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in any thing
To do it as for Thee.

The second verse runs:

A man that looks on glass
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth through it pass,
And then the heaven espy;

And the fifth:

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and th' action fine.

The poem called *The Quip* is all life, significance and surprises. Its twenty-four lines resume all Herbert's life, his resistance to the ironical appeals of the World, Beauty, Money, Glory and Wit, who in turn ask him why he shuns them. His only reply is:

But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

Such short poems as *The Pulley* and *The Collar* are moving in their strangeness.

In the latter the poet cries out at the restraints his piety imposes on him:

Sure there was wine
Before my sighs did dry it; there was corn
Before my tears did drown it.

He determines that he will "suit and serve his need":

But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild
At every word,
Methought I heard one calling, "Child";
And I replied, "My Lord."

There is great power in the poem in which he apostrophises Death:

Death, thou wast once an uncouth hideous thing,
Nothing but bones.

Now Death has lost its sting:

But since our Saviour's death did put some blood
Into thy face,
Thou art grown fair and full of grace,
Much in request, much sought for, as a good.

Nothing is more stimulating than to read these short poems, which are so much alive, so strange and so weighted with meaning, their faults of taste redeemed by their flashes of poetry.

(*b*) CRASHAW.—Richard Crashaw (1612-49),[1] who was more than twenty years younger than Herbert and a great admirer of *The Temple*, did not remain within the Anglican fold. When he was about thirty-three he became a Catholic, and he ended his life in Rome as secretary to Cardinal Palotta. He began by writing the verses of an amorist and humanist. While still at the university, he was an expert Latin poet. To the models of antiquity he added models taken from Spain and Italy, for he fell under the spell of the colour, the exaltation and the melody of the poetry of these southern countries. He was attracted not only by these glowing qualities, but also by the extravagant preciosity of such as Marini and the ardours of the Spanish mystics. It is after their fashion rather than Donne's that he is metaphysical.

The first collection of his poems to be published after his death was called *Delights of the Muses*, and includes a celebrated translation or rather paraphrase of a poem by a Jesuit on the nightingale's song, *Music's Duel*. Never did English show more virtuosity than when Crashaw analysed the bird's trills. The extraordinary wealth of his vocabulary is as astonishing as his infinitely subtle observation of every change in the bird's "quick volumes of wild notes."

His earliest poem, *Wishes for the Supposed Mistress*, is rhythmically unique, and has a verbal vigour which is prestigious. In it he enumerates the gifts which he would wish his beloved to possess, gifts amounting to impossible perfection, since they include every beauty of face, mind and heart.

It is, however, his sacred poems which contain the chief share of Crashaw's enthusiasm and what may be called his voluptuous

[1] *Complete Works of Crashaw*, ed. Grosart, 2 vols (1887-8); *Poems*, ed. Waller, Cambridge English Classics (1904); ed. Tutin (1904); ed Martin (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1927). See E. Gosse, *Seventeenth Century Studies* (1897).

exaltation. He published in 1646 a collection of poems written before his conversion and called *Steps to the Temple*. In this he translates, under the title *Sospetto d'Herode*, the first canto of Marini's poem on the Massacre of the Innocents, and overweights it with ornament. Even more characteristic is *The Weeper*, a litany in praise of Magdalen's tears which includes every conceit ever inspired by a weeping mistress, together with many others invented by the poet, all transposed into a religious key. Cruel outrages on taste alternate with admirable poetic visions. Of Magdalen, he says, "upwards thou dost weep," because her tears go to heaven:

Every morn from hence
A brisk cherub something sips,
Whose soft influence
Adds sweetness to his sweetest lips.
Then to his music, and his song
Tastes of this breakfast all day long.

When some new bright guest
Takes up among the stars a room,
And Heaven will make a feast,
Angels with their bottles come;
And draw from these full eyes of Thine,
Their master's water, their own wine.

But how he compensates by his vision of the saint's grieving countenance:

Not in the evening's eyes,
When they red with weeping are,
For the Sun that dies,
Sits sorrow with a face so fair,
No where but here did ever meet
Sweetness so sad, sadness so sweet.

Sadness, all the while
She sits in such a throne as this,
Can do nought but smile,
Nor believes she sadness is;
Gladness itself would be more glad
To be made so sweetly sad.

While yet an Anglican, Crashaw conceived ardent veneration for Saint Teresa, and he returned to her as a Catholic in order to write his most magnificent hymn, the *Flaming Heart, upon the Book and Picture of the Seraphical Saint Teresa*. The flight of

holy love which ends this poem is perhaps the most ardent product of English religious poetry.

Crashaw's faults are conspicuous and not one of his poems is exempt from them. There is not one which can be quoted from end to end without offending taste by some absurdity. Although Herbert abounded in conceits, several of his numerous poems are free from them. But Crashaw scattered them everywhere. Yet he possessed certain properly poetic qualities in higher degree than Herbert. While he was less intellectual than the former poet, and while his language was less simple and precise, he had more warmth, colour and harmony. His lyric flights have been equalled only by Shelley. By the strangeness and obscurity of his poetry and the flashes which light it up, and by the frequently charming and invariably melodious lack of precision in his style, he has curious analogies with the best of the recent symbolists. His poems are approximations to thought, full of music and imagery.

(*c*) VAUGHAN.—Unequality is also a characteristic of the verses of Henry Vaughan (1622-95)[1] the mystical Welsh doctor who was born in the land of the ancient Silurians and liked to call himself a Silurist. He began by writing secular poetry which betrays Ben Jonson's influence—*Olar Iscanus,* finished in 1647; but an illness detached him from the world and turned his thoughts to spiritual things. He became impregnated with the poetry of George Herbert and imitated him, writing *Silex Scintillans,* which appeared in two parts in 1650 and 1655. He is perhaps the seventeenth-century poet who has been most scorned and who most surprisingly recovered his place in the public estimation. His verses were long taken to typify the obscure, the platitudinous and the inharmoniously rude.

As we pass from one to another of his poems, we also change from absolute blame to supreme praise. Only a few have indubitable value, but these are pure gold. In them Vaughan is more melodious than Herbert; his mysticism is more fluid and less argumentative and his imagination is mellower. He prays not in a church like Herbert, but in the open air. His own picturesque country has inspired him with love for nature, and this feeling mingles with his Christian meditations and imparts to

[1] *Poems,* ed. Chambers, 2 vols. (1896, reprinted 1905); ed. I C Martin, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1915).

the best of his work something which is romantic and modern. Vaughan has a hermit's soul. The large number of his poems which are too directly inspired by Herbert are usually inferior to their model. He lacks the art to construct even a few stanzas, nor can he conclude a poem. His versification is far less skilful and varied than Herbert's, and almost always his verses read like an improvisation, often an awkward one. But his meditations on life and death, in the face of changing nature, are graced by new images. There is, for instance, a poem in which he tells that he has lost one dear to him and his heart is heavy. He walks in a field

Where I sometimes had seen the soil to yield
A gallant flower,
But winter now had ruffled all the bower.

Then he digs in the soil:

And by and by
I saw the warm recluse alone to lie,
Where fresh and green
He lived of us unseen.

The poet weeps upon the earthy bed:

Then sighing whispered, "Happy are the dead!
What peace doth now
Rock him asleep below!"

He then prays that he may again see him whom he mourns.

On another day he meditates before a waterfall, of which the "transparent, cool and watery wealth" falls,

As if his loose, liquid retinue stayed
Lingering, and were of this steep place afraid,
The common pass
Where clear as glass,
All must descend
Not to an end,
But quickened by this deep and rocky grave,
Rise to a longer course more bright and brave.

The waterfall is to him a symbol of life and death.

It is part of his originality that he felt the poetry of childhood. His *Retreat* anticipates Wordsworth's famous *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*. It is with the same regret for vanished glory and purity that Vaughan reverts to his childhood:

Happy those early days when I
Shined in my angel infancy!
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second race,
Or taught my soul to fancy ought
But a white, celestial thought;
When yet I had not walked above
A mile or two from my first love,
And looking back, at that short space,
Could see a glimpse of his bright face.

The whole poem is exquisite; it has not a discord. Yet it is perhaps not here, but in the poem which begins, "They are all gone into the world of light," that Vaughan reaches artistic perfection, is happiest in his choice of rhythms and images:

I see them walking in an air of glory,
Whose light doth trample on my days:
My days, which are at best but dull and hoary,
Mere glimmering and decays.

Despised though Vaughan was by his contemporaries, at least his glorification of childhood was emulated by Thomas Traherne, who was born about 1634 and whose poetry and prose, up to a few years ago (1903), existed only in manuscript. Traherne's poems are, for the most part, inartistic, yet include some admirable achievements, like *The Wonder,* which express a child's wonder at the body in which his soul is lodged and the world into which he is transported. Traherne continues Anglican mystical poetry down to the Restoration.

(*d*) Other Religious Poets.—We have to go back a little in order to make room for the Catholic poet William Habington (1605-54), a pupil of the Jesuits of Saint Omer who wrote verses of pure love to Castara, telling like beads his metaphysical fancies, which would be more excusable in a more imaginative and passionate poet.

There is more to interest in Francis Quarles (1592-1644), an Anglican with Puritan tendencies and a man of the world converted to piety, who published, amidst other work, his very popular *Emblemes* in 1635. He was an improviser, almost a journalist in verse. The *Emblemes* are a series of rhymed meditations commenting on verses of the Bible and corresponding to the illustrations which Herman Hugo, a Jesuit of Brussels, inserted in his book *Pia Desideria.*

With untiring energy, Quarles adds meditation to meditation, and his metrical commentary is very often commonplace. His language is frank and while not less extravagant is less obscure than that of his contemporary poets. Since he appeals to the great mass of readers, he banishes very rare words from his vocabulary and over-refinement from his style. Even his bad taste is within everybody's reach. He is a metaphysical poet for the many.

6. *Puritan Poetry. Marvell.*—The Puritans also had their songsters, who, while they were less numerous than those of the other party, included one of the most endearing and another, much the greatest of the poets of the century—Marvell and Milton.

It is impossible not to place among the Puritans Andrew Marvell (1621-78),[1] who under the Commonwealth was tutor to the daughter of Lord Fairfax, the great Parliamentary general, and who subsequently was Milton's friend and with him secretary to the Privy Council. He was the most inspired and affectionate of Cromwell's paneygrists, and after the Restoration he carried on in verse and prose the struggle for religious and political liberty. Yet it must be recognised that no one could be less like than Marvell to the conventional harsh and gloomy Puritan, the enemy of all worldly and artistic amusement, for ever mouthing verses of the Old Testament in order to denounce the sins of the world.

This figure is dispelled as we look at Hanneman's portrait of Marvell, a man thirty-seven years old, with brilliant, living eyes, a laughing, mocking mouth and a calm brow, or as we read the verses which the poet wrote in his thirtieth year, alight, as they are, with human love and feeling for nature. Even in the poems of his maturity and in his pamphleteer's prose the gaiety is apparent of a jovial and mirth-loving spirit. On the whole, religion has far less place in Marvell's verses than in those of the Anglicans we have just considered. While he wrote many verses which witness to the sincerity of his faith, he made both more numerous and finer poems filled with the joyous humanism and the cordial, vital quality which prove him a son of the Renascence.

[1] *Complete Works in Prose and Verse*, ed. Grosart, 4 vols. (1872-5); *Poems and Satires*, ed. Aitken in 2 vols. (1892), and in 1 vol. for the Muses' Library (1898). See A. Birrell, *Andrew Marvell* (English Men of Letters Series, 1905).

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Undoubtedly he revered the Bible, but he also loved wine, women and song.

He wrote his essentially poetic works at Nunappleton, Lord Fairfax's country-seat, where he lived from 1650 to 1652. He is inspired by the country, but not, like earlier poets, by the country seen in accordance with the pastoral convention. The desire for a more precise, for a local poetry, was already making itself felt, and one of the first poems which fulfilled it was John Denham's *Cooper's Hill*. But while a landscape was to Denham no more than the starting-point for historical and moral reflections, Marvell indulged far more fully in the happy contemplation of natural scenery. Before him only Wither had expressed, amid much rubbish, the intimate enjoyment he drew from fields and woods. Marvell spontaneously returned to this theme which was to be so dear to the Lake Poets. He is very Wordsworthian in *Upon the Hill and Grove at Billborough*, in which he describes a sort of natural terrace whither Fairfax, after his retirement, was wont to resort in search of quiet and of a meditative mood.

Marvell relates his own feelings in the longest of his poems, *Upon Appleton House*, in which he shows that he is familiar with the aspects of the country and its trees and birds, and that he has studied and compared the songs of birds. He anticipates Wordsworth in preferring the song of the dove to that of the nightingale. As he walks, he can

> . . . through the hazels thick espy
> The hatching throstle's shining eye,

and watch the woodpecker at work. He almost identifies himself with the birds and growing things:

> Thus I, easy philosopher,
> Among the birds and trees confer;
> And little now to make me wants
> Or of the fowls, or of the plants.

He has dialogues with the singing birds. The leaves trembling in the wind are to him Sibyls' leaves:

> What Rome, Greece, Palestine, ere said,
> I in this light Mosaic read.
> Thrice happy he who, not mistook,
> Hath read in Nature's mystic book.

To be covered with leaves is a delight to him:

> Under this antic cope I move,
> Like some great prelate of the grove.

He calls upon the leafy shoots to cling to him:

> Bind me, ye woodbines, in your twines,
> Curl me about, ye gadding vines.

This is the exalted love for nature of a romantic, but a hint of strangeness and of Elizabethan pedantry are mingled with it.

Marvell's feeling for animals, his suffering when they suffer, is voiced with infinite gracefulness in his semi-mythological poem the *Nymph Complaining of the Death of her Fawn.*

He was the first to sing the beauty and glory of gardens and orchards. In them he tastes his dearest delights: it seems to him that all creation is

> Annihilating all that's made
> To a green thought in a green shade.

Marvell's *Garden* foreshadows Keats by its sensuousness, and Wordsworth by its optimistic and serene meditative mood.

Yet he preferred wild to cultivated nature. It is in the spirit of charming Perdita in *Winter's Tale* that, in the *Mower against Gardens,* he protests against artificial gardening processes—grafting, budding and selection.

The feeling for nature which, in the poems we have mentioned, is expressed in its pure state, is readily introduced into poems which are otherwise inspired, by Christianity or by love, nowhere better than in the famous *Song of the Emigrants in Bermuda.* Here Marvell imagines that he hears a Puritan refugee from the Stuart tyranny singing praises to God as he rows along the coast of an island in the Bermudas, "safe from the storms' and prelates' rage":

> He hangs in shades the orange bright
> Like golden lamps in a green night,
> And does in the pomegranates close
> Jewels more rich than Ormus shows.

Sometimes Marvell returns to the pastoral, but he gives it a new emphasis of truth, even of realism. The short idyll *Ametas and Thestylis making Hay-Ropes* is very original and graceful, and there is also the touching complaint of *Damon the Mower,*

who, working beneath a burning sun, laments his Juliana's hardness of heart.

Love poems are not numerous in Marvell's work, but among several which are graceful (*The Gallery*) or slightly ironical—denouncing woman's tricks, artifices and coquetry (*Mourning, Daphnis and Chloe*)—a few hold us by their passion. His lines *To His Coy Mistress* have Donne's strength and passion without his obscurity or bad taste, and run easily and harmoniously. They are the masterpiece of metaphysical poetry in this genre, and they also show a return to the anacreontic theme, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may." But it is repeated with a new intensity. It issues from a heart truly deep and passionate, and the love which is demanded is violent and forceful:

> Now let us sport us while we may,
> And now, like am'rous birds of prey,
> Rather at once our time devour,
> Than languish in his slow-chapt pow'r.
>
> And tear our pleasures with rough strife
> Thorough the iron gates of life.
> Thus, though we cannot make our sun
> Stand still, yet we will make him run.

These lines are the very essence of the poetry of Marvell, that strange, sensuous, passionate Puritan. He had, however, another vein. He was an ardent patriot, and patriotism rather than piety may be said to have dictated his verses on Cromwell's protectorate and death. It is the dominant note of his *Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland* (1650), *First Anniversary of the Government under His Highness the Lord Protector* (1655), and *Poem upon the Death of His late Highness the Lord Protector*. A sort of competition of poets, in which such as Waller and Dryden took part, was provoked by the great man's death, and Marvell carried off its prize because in his verses the man speaks through the poet. They are penetrated with emotion. Better than the others, Marvell gives the impression of the greatness of him he sang and the immensity of the loss his death occasioned.

After the Restoration Marvell pursued only the art of satire, in prose and verse, and this phase of his accomplishment is better studied elsewhere. We have said enough to show in how far he

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was original as a pure poet. Nature endowed him richly: his sincerity and straightness of vision sufficed to raise the metaphysical school, to which he belonged, from its state of decline, and to bring it back from extravagance to reason without alienating fancy. In the history of the feeling for nature his place is considerable. He expressed himself with liveliness and happy audacity. But he paid too little regard to versification. His lyrical work is written almost entirely in rhymed eight-syllabled couplets, a pleasant metre, but one so easy that it tempts to carelessness. In the formation of his stanzas, Marvell shows himself one of the least varied and inventive poets of his time. To rank among the greatest, he should have had a more exacting standard of art, and perhaps a more whole-hearted devotion to poetry, as well as those supreme qualities of mastery of the word and the line which are the glory of the other Puritan poet, John Milton.

7. *The Precursors of the Classicists.*—(*a*) ABRAHAM COWLEY. Of the poets of the middle seventeenth century, a few are a link between the past and the present, between the Renascence and modern times. Their merits should be considered relatively rather than absolutely. Their interest has come to be mainly historical, to lie in the evidence they afford regarding new intellectual and literary tendencies, especially such of these as affect literary form.

In their first rank is Abraham Cowley (1618-67),[1] who was the most famous of them in his lifetime, enjoying a greater reputation not only than Herrick, who was almost unknown, but even than Milton. Milton himself considered that Cowley was one of the three great English poets, the other two being Shakespeare and Spenser. His renown long outlived him, yet lessened with the passage of years. Dryden said of him that, "though he must always be thought a great poet, he is no longer esteemed a good writer," and Pope, who owed him much, almost pronounced his condemnation a generation later:

> Who now reads Cowley? If he pleases yet,
> His moral pleases, not his pointed wit;
> Forgot his epic, nay Pindaric art,
> But still I love the language of his heart.

[1] *Complete Works*, ed. Grosart (1881); *Poems*, ed. Waller (Cambridge, 1905); *Essays, Plays and Sundry Verses*, ed. Waller (Cambridge, 1906). See S. Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets* for life of Cowley; E. Gosse, *From Shakespeare to Pope* (1885), *Seventeenth Century Studies* (1897).

Yet, when Doctor Johnson wrote his *Lives of the English Poets* in 1778, he began with Cowley. Cowley existed for him, for all that he complacently gives the list of his faults. Cowley headed the moderns; his predecessors were out of date. Everything about Cowley assigns him to a transitional position: he was the last of the metaphysical poets and in many respects he foreshadowed the English classicists.

He was marvellously precocious. Several, and not the least distinguished, of his poems date from his adolescence. As a good Anglican and a faithful Royalist, he might be reviewed among the Cavalier or the religious poets of the middle of this century. Equally, he deserves to be numbered among the disciples of Donne. His knowledge of the ancients, whom he imitates, entitles him to be considered a humanist. But with these characteristics certain others are mingled which are new and which modify them. With all his piety, his fantasy, his pointedness and his Pindarism, Cowley is, first of all, an intellectual. He was the friend of Hobbes and admirer of Bacon, a founder of the Royal Society and a devotee of science who was made an M.D. of Oxford and was a student of botany.

Entirely without mysticism, capable of affection but not of passion, a sincere friend and a tepid lover, his mind dominated his heart and imagination. It was less pure reason which ruled his faculties than wit, the active and voluntary play of his combined intellect and fancy. His poetry, which never glows and is often imitative and cold, is full of learned reminiscences and scintillates with witticisms.

His love verses in the fashion of the day, published in 1647 in the collection called *The Mistress*, are new versions, by a practised but untemperamental versifier, of the current themes of amorists. He succeeds only when he is amusing himself without any attempts to show feeling, as in the ballad called *The Chronicle*, in which he jestingly enumerates the mistresses who have reigned over his heart in succession. These are charmingly dexterous verses which we are not asked to take seriously. Herrick also gives the list of his mistresses, but with a tinge of melancholy which gains credence for himself and indulgence for his fickleness. Cowley's poem is no more than a set of pretty *vers de société*.

Cowley's great poetic ambitions have survived only as wit-

nesses to his humanist's zeal. He conceived the idea of writing verses after Pindar. Ben Jonson had made a passing essay in this direction, but Cowley applied himself diligently to the task. He thought, as he relates in his copious commentary, to reproduce Pindar's enthusiasm, the boldness of his images and the freedom of his strophes. In truth, conceits, hyperboles and antitheses, copied from Donne, fill his long, irregular stanzas, in which homely, even indecorous, imagery alternates with grandiloquence. The result would be unreadable were it not lightened by flashes of wit. Here Cowley inaugurates a fashion, that of the irregular, debased Pindaric ode.

He dreamt of emulating the epics of antiquity, a dream notoriously common to all European countries during this century. It is accountable for Cowley's *Davideis*, which was intended to have twelve cantos but ends with the fourth. This poem is in the succession of Saint-Amand's *Moïse Sauvé* (1653) and of Chapelain's *Pucelle*, which also appeared in 1656, of poems, that is, which apply a form derived from antiquity to a Christian subject. Cowley anticipated Milton in going to Homer, and even more to Virgil, for a mould in which to cast his biblical matter. Unlike Boileau, he believed that a poet who was born a Christian ought to use the themes provided by Christianity.

Davideis begins with a vision of Hell, where there is uneasiness because of the progress of David, which Lucifer proposes to stem. With the help of Envy, the Prince of Darkness breathes jealousy into the heart of Saul. A second scene shows Heaven watching over David. Structurally all this opening is strikingly analogous to *Paradise Lost*. Structurally only, for Cowley's Lucifer is still a mediæval monster, howling and brandishing his tail. And in the sequel the two poems follow opposite courses. Instead of reproducing the first of dramas, which decided the fate of mankind, Cowley stages a minutely detailed story following the biblical narrative, but attempting to animate it by realism and to give it relief by pastoral touches. A very insipid conventional pastoral relates the love of David and Michal. The realism destitute of any local colour is obtained by modernising and vulgarising Scriptural indications. The College of the Prophets in which David takes refuge is, on Cowley's own showing, modelled on an English university—it is supplied with an excellent library.

Cowley yields to the temptation to antitheses and epigrams afforded by his rhymed lines, disposed in couplets, and his sacred poem resembles the Bible less than it heralds *The Rape of the Lock*. His temperament was no more epical than it was Pindaric. He lacked grandeur of imagination, but not ingenuity. His best work is contained in his *Miscellanies*, on which he himself set little store, and which he filled with occasional verse. Here we find the poems which show him at his best as a man, that *On the Death of Mr. William Hervey*, a Cambridge friend, and that *On the Death of Mr. Crashaw*. Cowley, an Anglican and man of the world, pays warm tribute to the Catholic and religious poet, and the generosity of his feelings is equalled by the justice of his judgment on the verses of the "Poet and Saint."

But wit is, more than aught else, the mark of Cowley. It is not surprising that one of his small masterpieces is the ode *Of Wit*. He defines wit in the classical manner, and, prodigal as he is of it himself, he would have it used moderately. He condemns wit which is not controlled by reason or which is displayed too lavishly—and adds:

Rather than all things Wit, let none appear;

he will have neither puns nor forced similes nor bombast. True wit is harmonious.

This very witty disquisition against wit, with its abundant imagery, ingenious to the point of subtlety, is curious.

Cowley's very remarkable poem *Against Hope* has the same character. It consists, from one end to the other, of subtle definitions of hope, so witty and so just in their strangeness that it is impossible not to admire the poet's virtuosity. He is on the tight-rope and we expect, at every moment, to see him lapse into bad taste. But, more sure-footed than Donne, he keeps his balance. Crashaw answered this attack on hope by a defence. The retort is very beautiful and more poetic than the condemnation: the comparison of the two poems shows that Cowley lacked the qualities which are properly lyrical, but his brilliant ingenuity remains dazzling.

With years, Cowley's intellectualism was accentuated. He was on the way to "the age of understanding." He wrote verses on *Reason* in which he defines his piety and in which, like a good disciple of Hooker, he takes up the contrary position to the

illuminates and the mystics. After the Restoration he addressed an ode *To the Royal Society* which is an eloquent tribute to Bacon. He was of those who thought that God reveals Himself in experimental philosophy, and he celebrates the great philosopher who, as Moses brought the Children of Israel to the Promised Land, led the minds of men from bondage to the schoolmen into the freedom of experimental science:

From words, which are but pictures of the thought,
(Though we our thoughts from them perversely drew)
To things, the mind's right object, he it brought:
Like foolish birds, to painted grapes we flew;
He sought and gathered for our use the true.

This significant poem concluded Cowley's unequal work. Without his defects as a writer and a versifier, he would have commanded more respect from succeeding generations. He had, however, no ear for sweet sounds. His best verses have a dry precision and are lacking in melody. He is too much given to expletives, and his rhymes are poor, often falling on weak words. He made some unhappy attempts at imitative harmony, to which he thought to attain by a singular violence—contractions and elisions which shock the ear. The classicists who followed him were affiliated to him intellectually, but did not acknowledge him as their true forerunner. It was Waller and Denham whom they honoured as the pioneers of the road they trod. To-day the pleasant prose of Cowley's *Essays* is more read than his verses.

(*b*) Edmund Waller.—Edmund Waller (1606-87) [1] was born in the year in which *King Lear* was played and died in the year in which Dryden published *The Hind and the Panther*. His long life links up two periods separated by a political convulsion and a literary revolution. During the time of civil disturbance he played a more important part than his fellow-poets. A very rich man, and a member of Parliament whose eloquence gave him influence, equally removed by his moderation from the uncompromising Royalists and from the king's enemies, he attempted to pursue a conciliatory policy which was doomed to fail. That he was no hero became clear when the plot which bears his name was discovered in 1643, and he saved

[1] *The Poems of Edmund Waller*, ed. G. Thorn-Drury (The Muses' Library, 1893). See E. Gosse, *Seventeenth Century Studies* and *From Shakespeare to Pope*.

his life by turning informer. He was condemned to pay a considerable fine and exiled from England, and he crossed to France, where he lived for eight years, becoming acquainted with French writers. He returned to his country in 1651 upon receiving a pardon from Cromwell, on whom he wrote a panegyric and whom he celebrated after his death; yet when the Restoration supervened he welcomed Charles II. in verse. He returned to Parliament, where his speeches were wont to be well received by a full house. He resumed his campaign in favour of liberal principles, was an advocate of pardon and toleration, and died on the eve of the Revolution. He left behind him a reputation for wit and his retorts are famous.

Throughout his life he wrote verse, but only occasional verse. He did not pride himself upon inventiveness. The aim which he set before himself in his youth was like that which the young Pope proposed to follow. "Methought," he is reported to have said, "I never saw a good copy of English verses; they want smoothness; then I began to essay." Smoothness does indeed distinguish all the short poems he left to posterity—panegyrics, eulogies of the king and queen and Cromwell, patriotic poems, love poems, literary eulogies of Ben Jonson, of John Fletcher and, under the Commonwealth, of Roscommon, jesting verses like the *Battle of the Summer Islands* and, finally, pious verses. Their date matters little. Elegance, correctness, a certain studied grace, some*thing cold and stilted, belong to them all. The wit of the meta*physical poets recurs in Waller, but is attenuated, diluted and purified. He is much less ingenious than Cowley, but also less apt to horrify taste. It is Thomas Carew whom he most resembles. The madrigals he sings to Sacharissa recall Carew's more decent verses by their distinction within a narrow compass, their regularity of structure and their adroitness. His well-known poems—*The Bud, Go, lovely Rose* and *On a Girdle*—are models in this genre.

His imagery is clear and well sustained. He does not always avoid the pedantry of the Renascence and he sometimes uses ornamental mythology unjustifiably, but in these respects he is *more discreet than many of his contemporaries. In his political* and patriotic poems, in rhymed couplets of ten syllables, he is dignified and lofty. The fine verses he wrote towards the end

of his life to express the serenity which accompanies old age might serve as text for an examination into the birth of classical qualities in literature. Here imagery is not strange or precious, but noble and strictly governed by the idea behind it. The lines are disposed in couplets each containing a full sentence. It is especially by the qualities which he displayed in this poem that Waller had an influence on literature. Dryden says that "the excellence and dignity of it [rhyme] were never fully known till Mr. Waller taught it: he first made writing easily an art; first showed us to conclude the sense, most commonly in a distitch." Others, including Sandys, the translator of Ovid, did this before him, but it was Waller whom the classicists delighted to honour. His celebrity as a man doubtless contributed to the fortunes of his poetry. He was known to the French at a time when it was France who could place the hall-mark on literature. He earned the friendship of Saint-Evremond and the admiration of La Fontaine, and Corneille was flattered to learn that he had the habit of translating a passage from his tragedies as each one appeared. Waller had the qualities, or rather the lack of defects, to meet the tastes and needs of a new age which cared less that an achievement should be original than that it should be correct and polite.

(*c*) JOHN DENHAM.—The other pioneer of classicism was John Denham (1615-69),[1] whose strength is praised by Pope in the same line as Waller's sweetness. The renown to which Denham attained by a small literary production is proof of the appetite of the age for regulated poetry. An official, a good Royalist and the son of a magistrate, he owed his fame, save for a few occasional poems, to his half-descriptive, half-didactic *Cooper's Hill* which appeared in 1642. It has been called the first example of local description, but in the main it is a meditation inspired by a place of many historical memories, near the Thames, Windsor Forest, the ruins of an abbey which recall the destruction of the monasteries, and Runnymede Field, where Magna Carta was signed. What description there is has a moralising turn. The Thames serves as a term of comparison for moral and even literary qualities, for instance in the four famous lines which the author added to the 1653 edition, and which became for the classicists a slogan, the æsthetic motto inscribed upon their banner:

[1] *Poetical Works of John Denham*, in Chalmers's *English Poets*, vol. vii.

O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
My great example, as it is my theme!
Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without rage; without o'erflowing, full.

To-day it is difficult to understand the brilliant success and long renown of this poem. More than half a century later Pope was inspired by it to write his *Windsor Forest*.

Among his miscellanous verse, two poems are witness to Denham's taste for metrical literary criticism. In his epistle *To Sir Richard Fanshawe upon his Translation of Pastor Fido*, he outlines, in some sort, a translator's art of poetry. He wishes them to be not slavish, but free and animated. His advice is expressed in well-turned couplets which Pope might have included in his work without alteration. His antithetical style throws his ideas into relief, and he uses the decasyllabic couplet to mark his meaning by the balance between the parts of a line.

The octosyllabic couplets of his elegy on Cowley are also thus used. This poem passes English poetry in review and places Cowley at its summit of accomplishment, Cowley who added the natural wit of Shakespeare and Fletcher to the art of Spenser and Jonson, and whose fancy was always governed by his judgment:

His severe judgement (giving law)
His modest fancy kept in awe.

He did not, like Jonson, "plunder all the Roman stores":

Horace's wit and Virgil's state,
He did not steal, but emulate!
And when he would like them appear,
Their garb, but not their clothes, did wear.

Denham may assign too high a place to Cowley, but as he praises his friend he defines his own taste.

Slight though the figures of these two poets may seem, as also that of d'Avenant (1606-68),[1] author of the epical romance *Gondibert*, who is often associated with them, their adoption as models by the Restoration writers is proof of a changed literary ideal. The age of the understanding, unable to take pleasure in the exuberant fancy of such as Spenser and shocked by the sleight of hand of the metaphysical poets, was at hand. The new litera-

[1] *The Works of Sir William Davenant*, 5 vols. (Edinburgh, 1872-4).

ture was called classical, but the word signified that it sought restraint rather than inspiration from the ancients. Were the title conferred by study of the great art of antiquity, he who would deserve it above all others would be the Englishman who wrote *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*. Nothing produced in the next century was as deeply marked by Græco-Roman influence on poetic form or showed as broad and as accurate an understanding of the beauty of ancient art.

CHAPTER III

MILTON

1. *John Milton (1608-74)*.[1] *His Early Poems*.—Wither ceased to be a poet before he became a Puritan; Marvell was numbered among the Puritans more by force of circumstances than as the result of his temperament. Milton, the only poet who identified himself with Puritanism, had so strong a personality that he cannot be taken to represent anyone except himself. Wordsworth spoke truth in his famous line:

> Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.

As a poet, he dominates his century from so great an altitude that he cannot be merged in it. He did indeed sing the praises of certain of his predecessors, declare that Spenser was his master, approve "Jonson's learned sock," and render homage to Shakespeare in feeling lines. But the ties which connect him with them are weak. His firm mind was proof against Spenserian exuberance; his ear was too delicate for Jonson's harsh, prosaic verse; his superb egoism substituted a single theme, the problem of morality as he himself saw it, for the innumerable aspects of Shakespeare's work, the interest which he extended to every one of life's manifestations. He speaks only for one soul, his own,

[1] *Works* in verse and prose, ed. Milford, 8 vols. (1851); *Poetical Works*, ed. Browne, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1866); ed. Masson, 3 vols (1874), in the Golden Treasury Series, 2 vols. (1875) and in Globe edition, 1 vol. (1877); ed. W. A. Wright (Cambridge, 1903); W. Raleigh (1905), etc. Numerous annotated editions of the separate poems.

Biographies· Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Poets;* D Masson, *Life of John Milton*, 6 vols (1859-80); Mark Pattison in English Men of Letters Series (1879); R. Garnett (1890).

Studies: Stopford Brooke, *Milton* (1879); Sir W. Raleigh (1900); W. P Trent (1899); Williamson (1905); S. B Liljegren, *Studies in Milton* (1919); Voltaire, *Essai sur la poésie épique* (1726-9); article in the *Encyclopédie* (1771), Villemain, *Notice sur Milton;* R. de Véricourt, *Milton et la Poésie épique* (1838); Taine, *Littérature anglaise*, vol ii. (1863-4); de Guerle, *Milton, sa vie et ses œuvres* (1868); Schérer, *Études critiques de littérature contemporaine* (1863-95); J. Telleen, *Milton dans la Littérature française* (1904); D. Saurat, *La Pensée de Milton* (1920); J. Douady, *La Création et le Fruit défendu selon Milton* (1923).

which was indeed strong and lofty. Alone among poets he endeavoured to blend the spirit of the Renascence and of the Reformation. Spenser had attempted this superficially, writing moral and religious legends beneath the pictures which he painted like a great sensuous artist, but his juxtaposition of the two elements did but make their incompatibility more glaring. Milton was the first to conceive, from the outset of his career, a work which combined the perfection of ancient art and the intimate moral ardour of the Bible. He had experienced within his own heart the conflict of the opposing forces—paganism and Christianity, nature and religion—and he composed their differences *in his own way*. The proportion in which the two elements are present in his work varies with his years, but from the beginning his powerful will mingles with them harmoniously. No other English poet was at once so profoundly religious and so much an artist.

Milton was born in a London family in easy circumstances, Christians who were not exaggeratedly strict, but succeeded in pursuing art as well as morals. His father was both pious and passionately devoted to music, and the young Milton's natural gifts, together with his success at school and the merits of his first verses, caused him to be consecrated to poetry and glory from an early age. Father and son seem to have shared the faith that such was his destiny. They had no thought of worldly renown, but believed in an indeterminate yet sublime vocation. The boy's preparation was intensely laborious: from the age of twelve it was his habit to work until midnight. He became a remarkable humanist, rivalling Buchanan as a Latin poet, and he also wrote verses in English, although his exacting standard, which left him long dissatisfied with his own art, led him to delay beginning his great works in the mother tongue.

It was at first intended that he should take orders, but he abandoned this plan when Laud was tyrannising over the Church of England and exciting Puritan indignation by Romanising Anglican ritual. Thereupon he devoted himself entirely to preparation for his poetic mission.

Meanwhile the youth, handsome and pure, knew the temptations of love and confided the first stirrings of his heart and senses to Latin verses: the charm of the fair young girls he saw in London parks, the disquieting voluptuousness of spring, the

loves of the earth and the sun bearing fruit at the year's renewal. He could readily have yielded to the pleasures of love and to the joys of wine also, for he knew that it was Bacchus and Venus who had always inspired the Muses. But he also knew them fitted to inspire only workaday poets. He who aspired to the highest poetry, whose ambition it was to be an epic poet, must *drink only pure water and have a youth chaste as that of a priest.* Such, he resolved, his own youth must be.

(*a*) ODE "ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY."—He was at this time twenty years old. After some interesting essays, some fine verses to Shakespeare and the superb *At a Solemn Music,* which weds Voice and Verse, he wrote, in 1629, his first masterpiece, the ode *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity.* It contains hardly a trace of the "metaphysical" strangeness then so popular, and so seductive to a young mind. In the opening verses of the hymn there is indeed some mannerism. The earth is said to veil herself with snow rather than that her Maker should see "her foul deformities":

> Only with speeches fair
> She woos the gentle air
> To hide her guilty front with innocent snow.

But this is all. As the poem continues it grows greater and purer. It is admirable when it depicts the straitening of Satan's kingdom at the Nativity, and an incomparable series of stanzas celebrates the end of paganism. "The oracles are dumb"; "the Lares and Lemures moan with midnight plaint"; the gods of Phœnicia and "the brutish gods of Nile," take flight. The day has dawned before which all the powers of darkness are dissipated.

Nothing as marvellous had been written in the mood of this ode. The stanza of eight lines of different measure, closed by an alexandrine, has both swing and majesty. The poem has, above all, that which no one else has possessed in the same degree as Milton—absolute perfection in the choice of words and sonorities. From the line "The oracles are dumb" onwards there is that intimate blending of sound and sense which makes Milton the most untranslatable of English poets. There is no apparent effort after imitative harmony. The interpenetration of sound and meaning is undefinable and mysterious. Proper names, the names

ds and goddesses, are marvellous in themselves because of lace given them. The imagery is restrained and has an ualled power of suggestion. Milton was well versed in all e pagan religions which he condemns, and was charmed by the nge forms they sheltered: "the pale-eyed priest from the ophetic cell" inspired by the oracles of Apollo, "the Flamens their service quaint," "moonèd Ashtaroth," "the Tyrian maids" no "their wounded Thammuz [Adonis] mourn," the worshipers of Moloch:

> In vain with cymbals' ring,
> They call the grisly king,
> In dismal dance about the furnace blue—

and the sorcerers of Osiris:

> In vain with timbreled anthems dark
> The sable-stolèd sorcerers bear his worshipt ark.

To evoke these visions, the young poet uses all the resources of a language enriched by the Elizabethan treasure. He employs energetic abbreviations and composite epithets imported by the translator of Du Bartas, but among the riches at his disposal he makes a severe choice. He keeps only the exquisite, reaches the limits of stylistic effect, but never lapses to obscurity or bad taste. To-day it seems incredible that the surprising beauty of this ode at once so imaginative and so classical, did not impress the poet' contemporaries with its sublime perfection.

Thus Milton was already dedicating his highest art to th service of his religion. He did other work which was on a larg scale, but he never surpassed this ode.

(*b*) "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso."—Milton was at Cambridge when he wrote the ode on the *Nativity*. He w thence to his father's house at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, ing abandoned all thoughts of a practical career and resolv devote himself entirely to study and poetry. From 1632 to when only rural leisure interrupted his solitary labours, h duced, one after another, the rest of his entrancing early

We have noticed the lively taste for the country wh tinguished Wither and Marvell. That poets who inc Puritanism and were genuinely repelled by the vices of and the town should seek "unreprovèd pleasures fre country was natural. Milton's work in the years which

in Horton, not far from Windsor, in a fine wooded country, well watered, rich and green, shows deep feeling for Nature.

This is nowhere clearer than in the first poetry he wrote there: *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso.* These short pieces are partly descriptive and partly poems of feeling; they reveal a landscape less than the poet's state of mind. Milton is discovered in search of the greatest of pure pleasures, or rather making a diptych to represent the two aspects in which pleasure appears to him at different times, the alternation of his mirth and gravity. There is not, as in Hercules' choice in the fable of Prodicus, conflict between duty and desire. There is no element of the tragic: nowhere else indeed does this pure poet show himself so sportive. He recurs to the theme of the little poem at the beginning of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* in which Burton, in alternating and antithetic stanzas, relates the charms and curses of melancholy. He is also inspired by the delightful song in John Fletcher's *Nice Valour*—"Hence, all you vain delights!" Like Fletcher and unlike Burton, Milton finally gives his preference to melancholy, but he first recounts all the benefits of mirth. His novelty consists in his careful observation, at first hand, of the country. The aptness of the word "twisted" to describe the eglantine may be disputed, but elsewhere there is only truth and pure poetry. He paints, on the one hand, all the joys which life and Nature, in their laughing guise, can bring a man—the spring, the morning, the lark's song, the sunrise, the men and women at work on the land, their rustic meals, the harvest, the stories told at night by the chimneyside, and in "towered cities," "the busy hum of men,"

> And Pomp and Feast and Revelry
> With Mask and antique Pageantry;

as well as the plays acted on "the well-trod stage," and the pleasures of "soft Lydian airs."

On the other hand, he describes the yet more penetrating pleasures of solitary meditation, sunset, the nightingale's song—moonlight, on the dry "smooth-shaven green," and to hear

> the far-off curfew sound
> Over some wide watered shore.

Or else the Penseroso, among his books in "some high lonely tower," reads philosophy or science, or he will

Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,

...l the morning appear, not in pomp but "civil-suited." His ...lks are among the "archèd walks of twilight groves," or "the ...dious cloister"; he no longer haunts the playhouses but, ...stead, the Gothic cathedral, where he hears "the pealing organ ...ow."

The subsequent over-indulgence in description may make the ...ines of this double picture seem too facile and summary. Yet no ...ater work was able to obscure the charm of these two poems or to equal their graceful restraint. Each seems to be no more than a collection of observations, yet each has, in the feeling which dominates it, unity. Each calls into being its own spirit: the rosy nymph of Mirth—

So buxom, blithe and debonair,

with her "wreathèd smiles," which "love to live in dimple sleek," tripping "on the light fantastic toe" and leading in her right hand "the mountain nymph, sweet Liberty"; and "divinest Melancholy," "whose saintly visage is too bright," and is therefore "o'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue," the "pensive Nun, devout and pure,"

With even step and musing gait,
And looks commercing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes.

Nothing could be simpler than the form of this diptych: it i... in rhyming couplets, each line having four accents, the very metr... of which the facility led other poets to be diffuse and garrulou... But here it is held in check by an artist who rejects all but th... exquisite. Milton uses learnedly what is licence in many oth... versifiers. He varies, at will, the calmer iambic and the abrup... and lighter trochaic measure. These two poems, which cont... altogether 328 short lines, are filled to overflowing with results of accurate observation and are an inexhaustible lesso... art. At the same time they display the whole of Milton's regi... the extreme notes of the gamut of his feelings at this time. register is short: it excludes sin, evil and pain, hardly inc... mankind except as a passing spectacle, and has no place fo... feeling which is not both very pure and very egoistica... intimate pleasures of contemplation and study. Milton'...

held, as shall be seen, what was greater and better than this: he was capable of sublimity, devotion to a cause, and submission to great sacrifice. The theme of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* merely is, in the last analysis, the search for the pleasures to which he was most susceptible, and his final preference is for the most solitary and unsociable of them, for melancholy.

Curiously he excludes love from his sources of felicity. This young man of twenty-five had turned his gaze heavenward and almost dreamt of a hermit's cell. Even in *L'Allegro* there is only one, and the vaguest, allusion to a fair lady living in a neighbouring castle "bosomed high in tufted trees."

Perhaps Horton had quenched the ardours which London once had kindled, or perhaps the poet deliberately confined himself to rustic themes in these poems. The conclusion is that he did not yet give himself free scope in English verse.

(*c*) HIS MASQUES. "ARCADES." "COMUS."—The moral problem is posed in the subsequent poems, which express, in allegorical or veiled form, the conflict in the poet's heart. Externally Milton observed the fashions of the Renascence. He wrote masques, those sumptuous operas which were the dazzling fringe of the dramatic art reproved by the Puritans, or he had recourse to the pastoral fiction. But this is true only of the outer form of his poems, which alone conformed to the spirit of the age. Every emanation of Milton's thought was inwardly austere and grave.

Arcades, the fragment of a masque, is a fine compliment in verse to the Dowager Countess of Derby, whose praises Spenser had sung when she was the wife of Lord Strange. It shows the genius of the woods at his work of protecting the trees and plants, or listening, at night, to the music of the spheres. Soon afterwards, Milton wrote for the same family the words of a complete masque, *Comus*, for which Henry Lawes supplied the music.

The occasion was the appointment, in 1634, of the Earl of Bridgewater as Lord President of Wales and his choice of Ludlow as a residence. His daughter Alice, who was barely fifteen, and his two sons, who were younger still, were the principal actors in the masque. Alice is represented to have lost herself in the wood on her way to the castle, to have become separated from her two brothers and to be misled by Comus, the lustful magician,

nakes a vain attempt on her virtue. She is saved once by rothers, who put Comus and his crew to rout. But enchant- has deprived her of the power of movement and she is set only by the intervention of the nymph Sabrina, who per- fies the Severn. The sister and brothers afterwards return he castle. Throughout the maiden is protected by a tutelary nius, "the Attendant Spirit," disguised as the shepherd Thyrsis, d it is with the help of his counsels that Comus is vanquished. When once she is saved, the Attendant Spirit, after finally xhorting mankind to virtue, departs to his celestial abode.

The plot is seen to be very slight. Milton goes back, beyond Renascence drama, to the simplicity of the early morality. He is without dramatic sense or the sense of the stage, and the masque is full of monologues and lengthy tirades. When the brothers have lost their sister, they discuss, in 160 lines, whether her virtue be in danger or whether she have in herself her means of defence. The Attendant Spirit then supervenes and continues the discussion for other 170 lines before any step is taken to save the maiden.

There are many charming, delicate descriptions in the masque, too subtle to be appreciated or even, perhaps, immediately under- stood, as they are heard on the stage.

The didactic intention is so apparent that it deadens the required emotion and prevents anxiety. Such confidence is fel in the strength of virtue that there can be no doubt of the even The girl herself feels fear as little as temptation. Comus, g of drunkenness and lust, has nothing of the true voluptuary. I shows the bones of anacreonticism too nakedly. His banquet and drinking could never have troubled the maiden's senses; schoolman's arguments are too cold to shake her. We c understand Spenser's Sir Guyon succumbing to the treach lures of Acrasia's bower, but Milton's heroine never ha possibility of falling. She is able to understand only the meaning of the words by which Comus seeks to induce her

Everything which might be dramatic is frozen or supp The characters remain abstract as virtues or vices. T happy stage effect is that produced when the girl en wood which Comus haunts and calls her brothers by he "sweet Echo." All the rest is poetry addressed to the e

mind. The pleasure of a spectacle is not provided any more than dramatic emotion.

These are grave omissions. In its old age the Renascence was letting go of part of its treasure. But in this masque there are compensating novelties which are admirable. The exclusive, absolute purity may not be very dramatic, but it keeps to the heights of lyricism. This is a white, immaculate hymn to virtue. The very passages which offend the dramatic sense are beautiful in themselves, for instance the elder brother's speech or that in which the girl repels Comus. The descriptions made with so much art are little fitted to be heard on the stage, but they charm when they are read, mingling, as they do, realistic touches and subtle classical reminiscences. Above all, the style is pure as the moral. It is a new style, but one enriched by its Elizabethan past and by the quintessence of antiquity: everything has been sifted until only the perfect remains. There is less movement than with the Elizabethans; the pace seems to have slackened since Shakespeare and Fletcher; but this style, long cherished and learnedly chastened, has reached the highest degree of perfection, is pithy and mature in the extreme. In the blank verse and even more in the rhymed passages of *Comus*, especially in the admirable [illegible] ous than "the native wood- [illegible] Milton's songs are exquisite [illegible] of versification and crystalline music of syllables in the song to Echo, the appeal to the nymph Sabrina, and the invocation "By the rushy-fringèd bank" are unequalled.

Hardly more than twenty years separate *Comus* from *The Tempest*, but the change wrought in this short time is understood when Shakespeare's Ariel is compared to Milton's Attendant Spirit. The winged spright, fretting under man's yoke, has given place to the angel with a moral mission who is clear about what he has to do and is not to be turned from his path. Both spirits leave the earth when their task is done, but while the Miltonian angel ascends to heaven amid moralising, mythological visions, his last words a plea for chastity, Ariel takes flight like a butterfly.

While Shakespeare is lost among his creations, Milton is in truth the only living being who exists in his own work. His heroine is himself; Comus tempts as he has been tempted; she

resists as he did; he speaks every word in the poem; Comus merely expresses the appeal to the senses which young Milton has felt. The moral of the masque is Milton's moral—high, disdainful and solitary. *The final impression is one of virtue remote* from mankind and above it, sure and haughty virtue, ignoring the multitude. For the Milton of *Comus*, as for the Calvinists, the number of the elect is few. The Attendant Spirit guards, on his own showing, not the wicked or the half-good, but only the pure. These are chilly altitudes. How many who saw the masque played must have felt that they were excluded from the small band of the elect!

(*d*) "Lycidas."—Less indirectly, Milton related the conflict in his own heart in the elegy called *Lycidas* (1637), which was the last of his early poems in English. It is occasional verse in the conventional pastoral form, and was one of some twenty laments written by young Cambridge men on the death of Edward King, who had been much loved at the University, and who seemed assured of a brilliant future when he was drowned in a shipwreck near Anglesea. Milton and King were probably not very intimate. The grief of a bereaved friend is less apparent in this poem than in the Latin elegy *Epitaphium Damonis*, in which a year later Milton mourned the loss of his beloved Deodati. Emotions are, however, of several kinds. That in *Lycidas* is born of the fact that Milton, thinking of King's fate, is brought back to himself, and it springs also from the highest and rarest of all sources of feeling—the beauty of verse.

The two hundred lines of *Lycidas* are among the most precious treasures of English poetry. Their pastoral dress is out of date and they abound in mythological allusions. There is religious satire in them, as in Spenser's eclogues; and they are not eminent for simple pathos. They have a very powerful but a special fragrance which cannot be appreciated without some initiation.

It is not King but Milton who should be sought in them. The death of this friend who was so young, and whose future promised so much, led Milton to reflect on his own life. Lycidas, or King, had been wont "to scorn delights and live laborious days," devoting himself whole-heartedly to the Muse without ambition of worldly success. To what end, Milton asks. Nowhere else has he so poetically uttered the haunting thought:

Alas! what boots it with uncessant care
To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?

Yet he does not hesitate in his choice. Phœbus tells him that the guerdon is not fame, "that last infirmity of noble mind," but that he must "in heaven expect his meed," and as he thinks of this distant and austere reward he sighs no longer.

His train of thought is interrupted when the Church is suggested, for, like all the more ardent Reformers, those who became Puritans, he was irked by Laud's tyranny and by the Romanising tendency of some churchmen. He inserts an invective which presages the part he was to play in controversy. But it is isolated. *Lycidas* remains the poem of a refined humanist, an example of supreme perfection of style, imagery and versification. A spell is woven as Milton laments that he must sing before his genius is ripe—

I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year—

and also by the lines in which he strews the hearse of Lycidas with flowers, then remembers that he has no tomb but the waters, then stays his tears at the vision of his friend rapt to heaven. Art in this poem rebels against strictness, in such wise that the most spiritual poetry constitutes a feast for the most fastidious ear. Milton mastered his instrument to such a point that he could write free verse, obeying no law but his own. The heroic line gives place from time to time to a short line; rhymes follow no fixed order; there are neither couplets nor stanzas, but rhymes variously and flexibly interlaced and occasional unrhymed lines. The only rule is that of the poet's exquisite ear. The echoing sounds cross each other capriciously, now widely separated, now suppressed, now, in obedience to the poet's melodic sense, repeated as often as six times, like the sound *ear* in the opening lines. The result is a marvel of liquid, blended harmony, whence monotony has been expelled.

At thirty years old Milton was still, more than anything else, a child of the Renascence. Although about to play a passionate

part in the civil and ecclesiastical struggle, he had not yet abandoned the ambition to devote himself to pure poetry and write a great epic. He dreamt by preference of the legendary Arthur and the battles between the Britons and the Saxons. To accomplish his great work he must complete his poetic education, and to this end he travelled to the classical land, and spent sixteen months in Italy, not suffering the revolt of the Scottish Presbyterians against Laud to detain him. To stay where the abhorred popes had their seat was also to dwell in the land of literary glory, both ancient and modern. He was in Florence, Rome and Naples, not hiding his faith, but giving himself up to enjoyment of art, taking part in academic discussions, writing fine Latin and Italian verses which caused the men of letters to marvel at the culture of this Northerner. In Naples he became the friend of Manso, Marquis of Villa, who had been the patron first of Tasso and then of Marini. In Rome, the singing of Leonora Baroni awoke his enthusiasm; it seemed to him that in her harmonious notes he heard the voice of God—"Nam tua præsentem vox sonat ipsa Deum"—that God, who was everywhere, spoke only through her:

> Quod, si cuncta quidem Deus est, per cunctaque fusus,
> In te una loquitur, cætera mutus habet.

Returning home by way of Lucca, he fell in love with an Italian lady whose praises he sang in five Italian sonnets. On all sides the voices of the Renascence were whispering their precious memories in his ear, telling him of beauty and love.

2. *The Period of Political Strife. The Sonnets.*—Meanwhile, in England, the struggle between the king and the Parliament had begun, and he says that it hastened his return. Certainly it awoke his dormant religious ardour. For twenty years the realisation of all his great poet's dreams was suspended, at the cost of a sacrifice which cannot be exaggerated and which should be the measure of the nobility of his soul. He did indeed try for some years to reconcile his newly awakened religious fervour with his poetic ambitions. His dream of an Arthurian epic was succeeded by a plan for a religious tragedy on the fall of the angels, the creation and the fall of man. But this, too, was abandoned for the duties which he held to be more immediate. Henceforth, until the Restoration, he wrote only prose, "wherein," he said to himself, ". . . I have the use, as I may

account, but of my left hand." He obliged himself "to embark on a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes, from beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies,". and

to club quotations with men whose learning and belief lies in marginal stuffings, who, when they have, like good sumpters, laid ye down their horseload of citations and fathers at your door, . . . ye may take off their packsaddles, their day's work is done. . . . Let any gentle apprehension, that can distinguish learned pains from unlearned drudgery, imagine what pleasure or profoundness can be in this, or what honour to deal against such adversaries.

Never did a poet torn from his Muse express his impatience more angrily. Yet he did not flinch, and until the Restoration silenced him as a polemist, he wrote no verse beyond some dozen occasional sonnets, of which four or five are, in their own genre, the most memorable in the language. They have nothing in common with the sonnet-series on love dear to the Elizabethans. As Wordsworth has well said of Milton's use of the sonnet:

in his hand
The thing became a trumpet.

Some of his sonnets are personal effusions, others allude to his polemical writings, or they are fragments of the great living epic in which he played a part—addressed to Fairfax, Cromwell and Sir Harry Vane. Many are deliberately rude and harsh, witnesses to his refusal to cultivate the slighter graces in this tragic time. But Milton was visited by Beauty even though he received her coldly. Try as he might, he could not shut out beauty and feeling. When in 1652 he had gone blind as a consequence of his controversy with Saumaise, and mourned the extinction of his "one talent" before he had had time to serve his Maker as he would,

. . . Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait.

There is powerful pathos in the sonnet he wrote to his second wife, Catherine Woodcock, who died in childbed in 1658, fifteen

months after their marriage. Milton had never seen her in life; his first sight of her was in his dream, after her death, when she

> Came vested all in white, pure as her mind:
> Her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight
> Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
> So clear, as in no face with more delight.
> But O, as to embrace me she inclined,
> I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night.

The most marvellous of his sonnets is, however, that on the massacre of the Waldensians by the Piedmontese. The Waldensians were dear to Protestants because they were supposed to have perserved primitive Christianity, and in England their massacre was greeted with horror which Milton interpreted. Here we see what his genius made of the sonnet. He returned to the Italian form at its strictest, the two quatrains followed by the two tercets, each with their two rhymes. But he makes no division in the idea. The fourteen lines follow a single uninterrupted train of thought; a phrase is continued from one line to another, even from one quatrain to another. The effect is surprising: sentences seem to be cut short, not by art but by indignation. But the most striking feature of the sonnet is the rhymes—on *ones, old, ay,* and the long *o*. They ring out like a knell or an alarm-bell, or like the groans of the poor unfortunates slaughtered on cold Alpine slopes. These fourteen lines are at once the explosion of a wrath as genuine as it was deep and an inexhaustible lesson on art.

3. *The Great Works of Milton's Maturity.*—In 1660 the Restoration forced Milton to return to private life. Both his life and his liberty were at first in some danger, but he finally enjoyed security in his retreat, whither some friends penetrated and where he was able to return to the poetic projects of his youth. They resulted in his three capital works, *Paradise Lost,* published in 1667, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes,* published in 1671. The Milton they reveal is new. His private misfortunes and the anguish of the nation had darkened his thought, and his long and vehement participation in controversy had implanted in him an ineradicable dialectical habit. He felt something like contempt for the exquisite productions of his youth, blushed that he had so loved rhyme. He felt the need of a severer harmony based only on rhythm and articulate only as was his thought. Henceforward he wrote none but blank verse. He had done with

pastorals, lyrics of determined form and songs, and also with slight subjects and with the fine analysis of subtle spiritual states. The blind poet rejected the themes of the Renascence and found inspiration and matter only in the Bible. He sang the creation, the fall of the angels, the fall of man and Christ's reconquest of Paradise, and he told of the sacrifice of Samson; who died willingly because his death entailed that of the enemies of his country.

(*a*) "PARADISE LOST."—*Paradise Lost*, Milton's principal work, is the most Hebraic of great English poems. It is the fruit of a Puritan's prolonged meditations on the Bible: it paints the visions the Bible has given him. He let nothing intervene between the Bible and himself; he allowed himself complete liberty in interpreting it, but he gave it entire faith. He accepts the whole of biblical history as authentic and sacred. But he retells it as one who bears all the burden of contemporary knowledge, whose personality is intense and self-centred, and who has little dramatic sense. He projects himself, his feelings, knowledge and aspirations, into the characters of his epic, both the primitive human creatures and the superhuman beings, whether celestial or infernal.

The strange result is a perpetual conflict between his faith and his nature which deflects the poem from its purpose and distributes sympathy in despite of the poet's intentions. The moral thesis of Genesis is submission to the Almighty, which makes disobedience into sin. But Milton, who wished to emphasise this moral, had an independent spirit and had lived independently. He had acclaimed and advocated the rebellion against the prelates and even the king, and celebrated the glories of regicide. In spite of himself, he was in deep sympathy with Satan, the great rebel of Heaven and the enemy of God. The pride and indomitable courage of the revolted angel rekindled the emotion of the intensest hours of his life, and, do what he would, he saw God as the King of England, surrounded by submissive and docile angels, as by courtiers, who spent their lives feasting, singing and fighting in glorious wars. Devoutly, but mechanically, he paid lip-service to the duty of obedience, but in his heart he was chanting a hymn to freedom and rebellion. It is in Satan that he has put most of himself, his pride and his temperament. As a sincere believer, he intended to "justify the ways of God to men."

e could not do it on the impulse of confident love. He pted it in speeches and arguments, often subtle and some- sophistical, and these are the least personal part of the the work of a pupil of the theologians. An immense place ne poem is given up to arguments by which it is encumbered chilled. Academic arguing in favour of divine foreknowl- ge and human free-will leaves even the pious reader in doubt d ill at ease.

When the dialectics are voiced by Adam or Eve, the surprise considerable that primitive beings, who might be expected to ave direct and simple sensations, to be guided by impulse and pure instinct, should habitually utter so many syllogisms. Thus facts which belong to history in Milton's time and his own mental habits constantly find their way into the ancient legend, which he transforms while he accepts it and falsifies while he professedly respects it. Hence result the limitations of *Paradise Lost*, and the element of the ridiculous which this noble poem includes and of which Taine made so much.

The imagination by which a man can get outside himself and his own time and evoke strange and far-away beings was not among Milton's gifts. His conceptions could, however, be vast: he could present the universe with a sense of its immensity which leaves far behind the curious, grotesque and complicated concep- tions of Dante. The two Hells have often been compared— Dante's various and fragmentary, divided into innumerable com partments; Milton's immense and indeterminate, and producin an incomparable total effect with its "darkness visible," and wi the gigantic forms of the angels changed into demons w sprawled on the burning marl. The picture of the creation of t world is no less great. A powerful imagination vivifies biblical text and the Creator's act, when he drew space ou chaos and made it fruitful, is described with marvellous forc

The picture of Eden has been derided as too much lik English park. Each man's ideal garden is indeed made o most beautiful spot he has seen. It is none the less tru Milton has diffused the richest poetry over his, yet never descriptions fade to vagueness. About his lawns and gro has caused a sun to revolve, marking the hours, a sun ar in their earliest perfect splendour. This painter drew ac but his total effects are none the less great and splend

Paradise remains one of the most beautiful dreams of the men who have been in love with Nature.

He transported into it, as his subject required, the eternal drama of conscience, man hesitating between good and evil, exposed to temptation and prone to fall. The Bible supplied him with the elements of this drama as he had himself experienced it. Love had set the snare in which his own life had all but been destroyed: at thirty-five years old he had married a Royalist girl who had left him, and in his anger he had clamoured for the legali [illegible] marriages had n [illegible] danger to a man's soul lay in woman, a danger which was great in proportion to his susceptibility to love. His own experience, as much as his meditations on the Bible, and doubtless on Roman virtues also, had led him to revise the conception of love and of woman which, ever since the introduction of the chivalrous ideal, had governed poetry. In the lyrics of the Middle Ages and the Renascence, inspired by the chivalrous tradition or the cult of the Virgin Mary, woman was the star, the queen of beauty and virtue. A knight must live prostrated before her; her least need was sacred. She was so high, pure and ethereal that natural love was too coarse for her and marriage too maternal. True love was Platonic and bound a lover who had overcome his carnal desires to an inaccessible mistress. Therefore the marriage tie was despised. The ideal was, in the last analysis, still monastic: it was virginity.

To Milton, woman was man's inferior, an imperfect creature, dangerous if she were not mastered. His view was supported by his memories as by the story of Eve. His Eve is charming and capricious, coquettish and wayward, incapable of sound reasoning and an easy prey to sophistry. Man's duty is not to humble himself before her, but to feel and proclaim himself master. If passion blind him too much, he is blamed by the angel Raphael or by Christ Himself. Adam's crime consists in his chivalrous behaviour on the day on which he sinned, and for this he is doomed to share the punishment of his criminal wife.

Milton also rebels against the doctrine of the superiority of virginity to marriage. In the complete union of husband and wife, in which the husband is the chief and the wife his obedient companion, Milton sees supreme morality and true felicity. His

s apostrophe, "Hail, wedded love," sounded the dirge of d conception, and restored true and perfect love, equally ct from lust and from asceticism or Platonism, to its place in centre of human life.

Milton so constantly returns to himself in his epic that he its its objective value, but this very self-centredness imparts to a continuous emotion and eloquence and a lyrical ardour which lminate when, on the threshold of his great subject, he invokes he Holy Ghost, or when he utters the complaint of his blindness, but which are present as often as the sacred legend touches a chord in his memory. His absorbent personality is the central force of the poem, while his art, more austere than in his youth but still sovereign, makes its beauty.

It is still a humanist's art. His superb rejection of rhyme is in the spirit of the humanists of the Renascence who were most in communion with the ancients. The Greco-Roman form of the epic, replete with Hebraic matter, is derived from ancient models. Its aspect, its divisions, and its style are those of the Æneid or the Iliad. A unique event, the fall of man, is depicted. It is enhanced by episodes closely connected with it—the fall of the angels, the creation and a vision of future times, which are inserted in the form of narrations by one of the characters, lik Æneas's story of the destruction of Troy in the Æneid. Chri tian miracles are substituted for pagan marvels. Classi mythology supplies only terms of comparison, but in a way wh betrays acute consciousness of the relations between the myth various religions.

The style is more Latin than that of any other English p The meaning of the words, the syntax, the division of sen and the use of the ablative absolute, constantly remi scholarly reader of classical authors. The periodic style unrhymed line, with its beauty dependent only on its and its inversions, have a severe solemnity, and unbendin The work is more full of meaning, denser, more uninte artistic and more constantly lifted above the level of p any other in English poetry. When *Paradise Lost* is with *The Faerie Queene*, the gain and loss which it rep be computed. The joy of free and adventurous curi fancy, the bold enjoyment of whatever charms th digious variety and the voluptuous music of

rhymes: all these Milton had lost. He had gained constructive force, unity of design, concentration of effort, moral seriousness, and the restraint which enables effect to be produced by quality rather than quantity. Spenser multiplied his monsters, but his description of Error, and of the Dragon who lays waste the lands of Una's father, is superficial, childish ornament, beside the terrifying visions of Sin and Death in the second book of *Paradise Lost*. This comparison gives the measure of the difference between the imaginations and natures of the two poets.

(*b*) "PARADISE REGAINED."—*Paradise Regained* completes and answers *Paradise Lost*. Its theme is taken from the first verses of the fourth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel—Christ withstanding Satan's temptations after forty days of fasting in the wilderness. Milton traces the Redemption back to this triumph, which Giles Fletcher had already sung in *Christ's Victory and Triumph*. Paradise was lost by Eve when she yielded to Satan's temptation, regained by Christ when He got the better of the same tempter, and thereby ended the reign of Satan upon earth.

Our first impression as we pass from *Paradise Lost* to *Paradise Regained* is of brilliancy dulled, a greyer atmosphere and lowered tones. By comparison, the second poem even seems to drag, to move sadly. Imaginative greatness, Heaven and Hell are gone, or nearly gone. Satan has shrunk in stature and his fire is quenched. Instead of indomitable energy he has tortuous slyness and hypocrisy. Instead of a marvellous epic we have a morality. The poem is entirely human, its interest concentrated on the temptation of a single soul. Milton, the great heretic, did not see God in Christ, but only superior humanity. It is only metaphorically that he calls Him the Son of God. He describes the efforts, the meditations and the interior struggles through which Christ determined and accomplished His mission. We are struck by the resemblance between Milton's Christ and the poet himself (I. 195-207). This Christ has rejected the idea of an heroic war as Milton did that of an Arthurian epic. Like Milton, He has searched His soul in order to know His mission on earth. His temptations are Milton's own, save that Christ is proof against the love of women, which Milton was not. To the offer of kingly dominion or of untold gold, Christ answers like an ascete and a republican. The tempter thereupon offers Him Greece, her art, literature and philosophy and her eloquence.

which to Milton would certainly have been the supreme temptation. He praises the wisdom of the ancients and describes Athens, mother of art and oratory. But the Saviour retorts by throwing contempt on knowledge which does not come of the fountain of light, and on wise men and their endless and vain disputing:

> Alas, what can they teach, and not mislead,
> Ignorant of themselves, of God much more,
> And how the world began, and how man fell,
> Degraded by himself, on grace depending?

Knowledge without true wisdom is vain. Even Greek poetry is inferior to Hebrew poetry; Greek mythology is a tissue of absurdities; Greek orators are far beneath the Hebrew prophets.

This poem has not the greatness, the vigor or the brilliancy of its predecessor, but it arrests and holds our interest by its revelations of Milton, his soul, and the change which had gradually come over him since the days of his passionate devotion to classical authors and the poets of the Renascence.

(*c*) "SAMSON AGONISTES."—*Samson Agonistes*, Milton's final work, is as personal as *Paradise Regained* and more beautiful. Even more than in *Paradise Lost*, the despiser of the Greeks shows himself their disciple. In form, the poem is a completely regular tragedy after Sophocles. It has choruses made of lines of unequal length which constitute long and free lyrical strophes and are interpolated in the dialogue, and the verse is rhymed only in the choruses, and there only exceptionally. The action of the drama passes in one place and during a single day. The conformity with Greek plays is outwardly greater than in any of the so-called classical modern tragedies. We must add, however, that the essential part of tragedy—progress and action—is wanting. Milton, lacking the dramatic sense, succeeded, after all, in producing only one more powerful lyrical poem. Not until the end of the tragedy, line 1300—when the total number of lines is 1750—can we discern a plot or perceive that the action is progressing and a future is indicated. Until then no issue is in prospect. There are only Samson's eloquent and pathetic laments and memories of the past. The play is almost entirely retrospective; in that it fails to arouse curiosity and uneasiness about the future, it neglects a fundamental element of tragedy.

But apart from this, the various scenes have a pathos, suf-

ficient for a poem not intended for the stage, which derives from the old blind Puritan fighter's instinctive identification of himself with the Hebrew champion who was Delilah's victim, and who suffered the yoke of the Philistines. He too had survived the triumph of adversaries he despised for their mean souls and vile pleasures, and in his heart the memory still rankled of the betrayal of his faith by a wife from the enemy camp. The drama is all Samson—the sadness of his lot, his remorse for his errors, his grief that his cause and his nation have been laid low, his impotence in a world in which he has become the slave of those whom he conquered and whom he despises. The scene is superb in which Delilah approaches him. "Like a stately ship" "with all her bravery on, and tackle trim," she hypocritically implores his pardon, advancing every pretext to excuse her betrayal—love, for she wanted him all to herself, and religion, for she claims to have acted in the name of her gods. He replies to all her advances by overwhelming her with his disdain, will not let her even touch his hand, and finally flings her an insulting pardon—

At distance I forgive thee; go with that—

and the chorus thereupon descant bitterly on the mystery of woman, whose love is not to be won by merit, whose nature is deceit.

After enlarging on woman's inferiority to man, they end with Milton's own conclusion:

Therefore God's universal law
Gave to the man despotic power
Over his female in due awe.

This drama, with its strong, naked language, worthy of the poet of *Paradise Lost,* although it discovers him in another aspect, was a noble conclusion to Milton's poetic career. It confirms what was evident from the first, that his work proceeded from a pride which reached sublimity and from an heroic egoism. It proceeded also from his incomparable art, shown equally, although diversely, in the delicate rhymed poetry of his youth and in the powerful blank verse of his maturity.

The appearance of these later poems in a dissolute, cynical time, incapable of feeling either poetic sublimity or religious exaltation, was strange. Milton was the last survivor of the great age.

A gulf, perhaps deeper than that between the English Middle

Ages and the Renascence, separates the Renascence from modern times. But what a marvellous transformation was accomplished in the century which intervened between the appearance of the first works of Spenser and Sidney, in 1579, and the last works of Milton, in 1671! The country which hitherto had always received the impulse to literature from abroad had become proudly conscious of her strength and originality. She had given birth not only to a multitude of men of varied talents, but also to a line of geniuses truly her own, in whom she henceforth admired herself and who were gradually admitted throughout Europe to a place in the very first rank of artists. Such was their prestige that even the revolution of taste and the appearance of new doctrines could not long or deeply modify their sovereignty. After the Restoration period, during which they were, it is true, unknown or despised with few exceptions, their memory prepared the way, throughout the eighteenth century, for the imaginative renewal which led finally to Romanticism. Distance increased their stature and they came to dominate English literature. Rich though this literature be in admirable writers, it has never produced any to surpass Bacon or Spenser, to attain to the same height as Milton, or to approach, even from afar, the place whence the light of Shakespeare shines on all the world.

PART II

MODERN TIMES (1660-1914)

BOOK I

LITERATURE OF THE RESTORATION (1660-1702)

CHAPTER I

SOURCES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW LITERATURE

1. *The Historical Significance of the Restoration with Reference to the Past and Future.*—From the political point of view the modern development of the English people dates from 1688, but in the moral and literary order the date is 1660. The Restoration of King Charles II. marks the decisive birth of the new world.

Whatever innovations may have been introduced by the Puritan Republic, from this point of view it formed an integral part of the past. Stern daughter of the Reformation, it nevertheless continued and completed the Renascence; it was the last of a series of great national experiments in which was expended a moral liberty that had been but recently acquired. The Elizabethan age had pursued its manifold desire for world conquest; it had experienced the thirst for the knowledge of antiquity, the taste for adventure, the love of the beautiful, the impassioned expression of self. The conflict between personal religion and ecclesiastical tradition, meanwhile, was a quickening force in the realm of spiritual ardour. Sectarian strife had mingled with the triumphs of national independence, and with the flourishing of art and literature. The forces thus liberated, and the fervent zeal in matters of religion, would give birth in turn to an ideal that aimed at organising life according to divine laws; and the Commonwealth, this compound of mystic and social aspirations, represents the vain striving, along the avenue of inspired thought, for an equilibrium, the experimental conditions of which were thenceforth to become more clear.

After this period of feverish activity, and under the exhaus-

tion that follows in its train, the vigour of the nation lapses into a state of temporary torpor; for the space of some thirty more years, it has to undergo the trials of an absolute régime. The constitution of parliamentary England, and the laws governing its progress, will only be definitively fixed with the fall of the Stuart dynasty. But already the ruin of the biblical absolutism of the "Saints" had restored to their normal functions instincts of liberty which sooner or later were to bring about the freedom of English politics. From now onwards, the era of too lofty ambitions and of juvenile errors is closed. The stamp of disillusionment, as that of reflection, is everywhere visible in the thought, the ideas, and the manners of the Restoration. Empiricism, in which is summed up the most characteristic genius of the English people, becomes the conscious law governing its existence.

In order to situate the Restoration, and link it up with a whole, there is thus no hesitating between the future and the past. It is a period which determines itself with relation to that which precedes it, and therefore might seem to be inseparable from it altogether; and so it is, in so far as political reaction is the outcome of action. But in all other respects, it is towards the future that it tends. Although a last upheaval will be necessary to annul the recurring offences of unlimited monarchy, all activities in the realm of thought enter, with the Restoration, into the cycle of their regular movement, free henceforth from all extreme accidental happenings. A new society and a new literature begin in 1660.

2. *The New Mental Outlook.*—If 1660 as a year assumes a greater importance than 1688, it is due to the fact that the deeper life of the mind is a more decisive cause, or a more essential aspect, of the evolution of the race, than are the stages which mark the progress of political history. The Restoration coincides with one of the most notable changes in the inner being of the English soul.

It is customary, in order to explain the main inflexion of modern English literary history, to show, first of all, that at this point in its curve, the government, the social life, and the manners, are undergoing a process of transformation; so that the change in the æsthetic tone of the period corresponds with that effected in the domain of outward reality. It is, however, more

correct, if one wishes to respect the real order of things, to follow the opposite course. For a considerable number of years an oscillation both in thought and in taste had been slowly preparing; the Restoration sees it take place, and on a big scale. This is certainly no chance conjunction, but it would be risky to deduce, so to speak, one of the two terms—whichever it be—from the other. We can only affirm that if the character of the new age reveals itself boldly and in a way that is strikingly manifest, it is because the circumstances of the time are wholly favourable to the spontaneous development of the moral rhythm.

(From the earliest days of the Elizabethan period, English literature had depended for its sustenance on the passionate life of imagination. It was an epoch when even intellectual inquiry was stirred by the rapture of sense and feeling; in other words, it represented a rich flowering of romantic inspiration. Already at the beginning of the seventeenth century a certain fatigue was manifesting itself as a result of all this feverish activity. From 1600 to 1660 there is a gradual change in the tone of the literature as well as in the temperament of writers. On the one hand, thought becomes more exacting, more laboured; on the other, the search for emotion is now more complicated or overstrung; and an intellectuality as clear as it is cold mingles more and more oddly with the capricious strivings of imagination. The last works of Shakespeare, and those of his continuators; the subtly imaginative analyses of Bacon; the poems of Donne, then those of the metaphysical school, had all revealed the secret working of the mind of the age. In spite of the names that continue to add lustre to Elizabethan literature even in its closing years, we find it languishing and dying because the inner resources that had fed it are now exhausted; and in its decadence there is recognisable the embryo of the literature of reason which must of necessity replace it.)

(The new instinctive desire is for order and balance in measure; that is to say, what was wanted in art was an intellectual quality, because the intellect alone is the chief factor in orderly arrangement and simple clearness.) The literary transition from the Renascence to the Restoration is nothing more or less than the progressive movement of a spirit of liberty, at once fanciful, brilliant and adventurous, towards a rule and a discipline both in inspiration and in form. Long before 1660, the verse of

Waller and Denham shows, in its movement and equal swing, how great was the desire for a music that was regular and cadenced, where the echoing of the rhymes continually reassured and strengthened the perception of order. From then onwards, classicism becomes the pole which attracts the hidden working of individual minds.

When once the "reign of Saints" terminates in indifference, weariness, or wrath, an unbearable and artificially prolonged tension of wills, sustained by the religious and mystical exaltation of feeling, gives way abruptly under the stress of a sudden conviction, just as it gives way to superior force. Reason, good sense, and the practicality of a people held in check for twenty years, break down the weakened dyke of Puritan tyranny; and with the fall of the Republic, there sweeps over the country a wave of scorn and hate for all the zeal, the straitlacedness of conscience, the sentimental aspect of piety, the cheat of a hollow spiritual and secular hierarchy. A great and decisive moral experience, underlying the political revolution of 1660, brings to completion the obscure working of thought that has been developing slowly for half a century. The nation as a whole, in its strong desire to live, gives itself over to ways of thinking and modes of life towards which its imperious instinct had already inclined it. (The moral rhythm which has long been preparing and incipient, finally frees itself in 1660, and with its irresistible swing carries England towards an era of sovereign rationality.

3. *The Monarchy and Manners.*—The new régime establishes itself for the benefit of a reconstituted hierarchy, while social relationships are determined by the idea of authority and privilege. The king is too indolent, too fond of pleasure to endow his personal government with any reliable and systematic strength. Around him, the aristocracy of birth resumes its privileged place; a court is organised; preferments and positions are distributed as the master pleases. After the threats of a democracy based on equality and communistic in outlook, which the agitation of the Commonwealth had in a dim way contained all those whose interest it is to have a stable order of things now joyfully hail the re-establishment of that order, whether in actual fact or in official fiction. Whitehall becomes the centre of officialdom and elegant life, throwing Westminster and Pa

liament quite into the shade. The brilliance of this focus is reflected in the nearest circles of society; the "town," that is to say fashionable London, prides itself upon the near presence of the sovereign, and acquires the courtier tone. Provincial England, remote and hidden away, does not participate in the brilliant life of this little closed world, save through the slow currents of circulation, either of men, of money, or of news. Everything favours the constitution of an aristocratic literature. The instinctive seeking after balance encourages the introduction of method in the realm of thought. Social influences are most decidedly favourable to the tendencies of literary taste. Rationality is the natural ally of order. It presupposes a certain choice, an analysis, a reflective turn of mind, which can be indulged in especially by those in the easier walks of higher life; at the same time it supposes a clear and disciplined habit of attention, rendered possible by culture and an atmosphere of calm. In a nation where the most naturally creative impulses have found utterance in an instinctive romanticism, classicism will be the outcome of a voluntary reaction, of a doctrine that has to be learnt, of a more or less artificial effort. Restoration society creates the atmosphere of refinement, or rather of exclusiveness, where an art can exist and flourish that is sustained, so to speak, by the inbred persuasion of its own superiority over popular forms of expression, as well as over the primitive and uncouth inventions of national genius.

At court, and in the social circles of which it is the centre, there reigns a tone of moral dryness and scepticism. The foundations of public law can no longer boast of tradition or mystery; too many upheavals have already shaken the prestige of the throne; while the Restoration of Charles II., despite the formal pomp it brings with it, and the ephemeral popularity of the king, is but a kind of fictitious reconstruction of royalty by divine right. Its main stay with the public is a political wisdom in which resignation has a share. The English nation, worn out by strife and by uncertainties, then surrenders itself to an absolutism that it hopes is limited. The nobles are now able to recover their prestige, their sinecures; the middle class, a calm so indispensable to its business concerns. The idea of public utility is at the bottom of this accord, an implicit contract indeed, the violation of which will at a later date bring about the fall

of the Stuart dynasty. Utilitarianism becomes the more conscious guide of individual actions. In opposition to a mysticism that is exhausted, corrupted by its inner wear, and changed into hypocrisy, the new régime re-establishes the supremacy of clear and cold experience; and the memory of all the lies and vain pretensions, so long endured, sharpens into an ironical mood the inner sense of this return to reality. A society devoid of all illusion sets about reconstructing itself on the unseemly ruins of a theocracy, and will no longer recognise any guide save intelligence.

The Puritans banned pleasure; the Restoration reinstates it in all its rights, and its new-found liberty develops at once into licentiousness. Public festivals are re-established, popular entertainments authorised, and the theatres are reopened. Manners are allowed to slip into the toleration of vice, and almost its encouragement. Against the painful, useless effort of official sanctity, we have the reaction of what is really the taste and instinct of the time. The atmosphere of violent and often coarse voluptuousness in which the court and the fashionable world are equally bathed, is intimately and secretly in accord with the arid tone and lucid outlook of the mental life of the day. The rational character of all artistic inspiration is supported by the dearth of any great enthusiasm, by a constant pursuit of pleasure and utility, which gives itself to be an enlightened quest.

The Elizabethan age had been an outburst of initiative and a fresh welling up of life; the Restoration, emerging from the restraint exercised by the Republic over all instinct, shows neither the same wealth nor the same vigour. Only in the outbreak of passion and sensual joy is there any enthusiasm; in everything else, it is as if the sap of the nation's life were impoverished. This is a misleading appearance, yet one that answers to a deep reality, a phase of critical thought rather than of action. The withering up, on the other hand, has a positive aspect, the progress in every direction of the spirit of rational research. The desire to judge and classify human values, to explore and organise the physical world, increases and expresses itself with an independence at least relative; literature and science benefit from the freedom allowed in matters of conduct. Writers grow conscious of the authority of rules, and are occupied in the task of

trying to frame them; the art of writing is the object of many a learned treatise. It now becomes an exercise of methodical and deliberate taste, to appreciate a book at its proper value. At the same time, moral and political philosophy sets out to formulate a more precise code of laws; the study of the human understanding is being boldly tackled; and the spirit of inquiry, freed from the sense of any impious purpose, begins to probe the secrets of nature. If the founding of the Royal Society is a sign, the importance of which cannot be too highly rated, it is because it corresponds with a widespread desire for knowledge, shared in by almost all the active minds of the time.

4. *French Influence.*—Thus the outstanding characteristics of the new age are explained by the remarkable precision with which social circumstances accentuate the spontaneous bents of souls. But one may wonder whether there are not, in the intellectual physiognomy of the Restoration, certain traits which come, as it were, entirely from without, and which are only the result of circumstances. Might not the influence of France be purely an accident in history?

It is not an accident. It had been prepared, in the first place, by the more frequent intercourse that had taken place between the two countries and the two courts, since the fourth decade of the seventeenth century. The choice by which France became the refuge for those banished after the Civil War, has a much deeper significance than can be explained by the mere convenience of that country's proximity to England; it arises from a strong affinity, and one that continues to develop, between French civilisation on the one hand and the very essence of monarchical culture on the other; with the result that the restored Stuart dynasty brought back of necessity with it the sense of the prestige of the French monarchy. If the exiles of the Commonwealth period—and with the courtiers of Charles II. were many of the writers of his reign—imbibed in France, or believed they had imbibed, the spirit of the nation's manners and literature, it was because they felt the attraction of a great reign that had already begun, of a national flowering that was already in full bloom. But neither geography, nor political and social history, can account for the force and extent of this influence. At an earlier date than in England, and in a more definite way, the moral development in France tended towards a phase of sov-

ereign rationality; and when once this ideal had grown clear and become, as it were, a beacon light on the horizon of thought, it anticipated and guided the secret desire of instincts that were feeling their way. And the way which they found thus was none other than that to which they had spontaneously turned. The ground was now ready to receive the seed of the French influence. This was fruitful, in so far as it brought into play scattered or precise affinities.

This is not the place in which to enumerate the various forms of this influence. It spread from the court and the fashionable circles of the capital to the most cultivated class in the provinces; it left its strong mark upon fashions and manners, the superficial sides of life; it even penetrated to modes of feeling and thinking, and through the language, as well as through the authority of precepts and æsthetic examples, it fashioned or rather taught and encouraged certain habits and preferences of taste. As soon as one goes into details, the number of imitations, borrowings, and reminiscences is very abundant; and the study of many a writer would be incomplete, if this influence were left out of account. But it is through their diffuse effect, through the creation of an atmosphere, that French literature and life have had their most subtle, most real, influence. In English letters and art, the tone of the epoch is made up of national sound-vibrations, with an intermingling of foreign notes. Among the latter can be distinguished that of Spain, the theatre of which, for example, was not without some action. But that of France is distinct and superior enough to impregnate the very quality of the harmony. The development of poetry, especially, bears the traces of this essential and, in certain respects, dominant suggestion. The character and rhythm of the English classical line are fixed, so to speak, by the authority of an inner choice, which in its turn is prompted, accentuated and even controlled by the cadence of French verse.

5. *Writers and the Social Surroundings.*—In order to complete the sketch of the frame in which Restoration literature develops, a place must be reserved for the social condition of the writer.

This has been recognised as one of the characteristic features of the period, and has served to supply a contrast with that which follows. The opposition thus established is exact, though it would be wrong to imply that, as from the future, the Resto-

ration differs in this respect from the past. The Elizabethan age had not as yet organised, according to definite standards, the life of those who provided its intellectual pleasures. The comparatively easy career of Shakespeare, as an actor and poet who had risen from humble circumstances, ought not to blind us to the fact of the suffering and struggles of so many of his contemporary writers. Literature at that date, despite the rich contribution of new blood, on the whole saw the continuation of the privilege which men of birth or wealth had possessed before. But with the Restoration the conflict becomes more acute between the regulations governing social life, and the demands of free literary creation; because it strengthens for a time the oligarchic character of society; because it confines more rigorously to one class the authority in matters of taste; and also because it withers up and cramps the very idea of artistic values.

The result is that until the end of the seventeenth century certain categories of writers enjoy, in comparison with others, facilities that are abnormally superior. The noblemen of old or recent family standing make it a point of pride to write, and everything tends to encourage them: the complicity of public opinion, the tone of court life, the character of the king, and his superficial regard for the activities of mind. The Cavalier generation which in 1660 reacquires a prestige that time has severely shaken, justifies its ascendency by something else than its prowess in love and gallantry; it has had much talent to display during the years of exile, and when these are ended it still has much to show, although not always quite so much. This self-confidence, which the events of the time encouraged and helped, explains the number of its efforts in literature, and, in fact, also goes to explain, most often, their at least relative success. Never has a man's birth appeared so much to imply a gift for writing.

Nevertheless, there is an increasing number of writers being recruited from among the ranks of the middle or lower bourgeoisie, and even from among the people. A certain spreading of culture is already beginning to penetrate to the lower levels of national life, and fewer faculties are sterilised by ignorance. But the men of letters who are without social standing or fortune, cannot live by their pen; the printing, publishing and selling of books are not controlled or protected by commercial customs or laws; the idea of property in art has not yet been

ved; lastly, the reading public has not yet been formed. writer chooses a patron, either permanent or temporary; atters him, dedicates his writings to him, celebrates the ts of his family life, and in return is the recipient of gifts alms. In that struggle for existence, there is left so large nargin to the caprices of chance, that the victims are numer- s; and among these must be counted, not only mediocre writers f all kinds, but also authors whose talent is of the best.

6. *Themes of the New Literature.*—It is under these diverse influences of the moral as well as of the social surroundings that the literature of the Restoration takes its rise. Many links connect it with that of the preceding age; no more here than elsewhere can it be said that there is evidence of an absolute cleavage. We have the same men writing before and after 1660; those who have waited for the return of the king in order to write, have breathed the air of the Republic; those who preferred exile not only have been influenced by foreign modes of living, but in the coteries of the emigration have felt the radiation of an ideal elegance and spiritual preciosity, in which survived the very soul of the Renascence in its declining phase. Despite the gap represented by the Republic, it is not only in an official and fictitious sense that Charles II. succeeds Charles I In a deeper plane, the initial stages of a literary evolution ha already unfolded themselves, announcing and preparing for t new age; themes had been sketched out, innovations attemp in form; so that neither in their inspiration nor in their ar language do writers after 1660 differ radically from t predecessors. Overlapping this date on either side, ce schools develop, just as others die out. Lastly, the app break with the moral past conceals the working of a ne psychological renovation which, through the permanent ac one and the same motive power, constitutes the solida periods, just as it produces their diversity.

But rarely has a literature found itself more openly tion against the general spirit of that which preceded i light of a rational ideal become conscious, the Restorat the English Renascence, and finds itself, for man frankly superior. It is elsewhere that it looks for in the classics of antiquity, or in those of contempo It adores Beaumont and Fletcher, venerates Ben J of a certain admiration for Shakespe

grieving at the latter's defects. But the development of the national literature since the Middle Ages seems to be in the eyes of the Restoration a slow progress towards a maturity of form, of which it itself is at last the happy herald.

What are the moral forces that can vitalise this literature? The newly restored régime pretends to bring with it the gift of order to society, and that of peace to men. Very soon there will rise against it a feeling of violent opposition; but the years in which the tone of the Restoration first reveals itself are years of political tranquillity. The artificiality of cultivated manners tends to alienate all thought from the preoccupation of the concrete, and from any suggestion of popular sentiment. A sort of detachment inveigles literature away from what is practical, just as from what is subjective and sentimental. Indeed, until the time when the strife of rival factions will again become active, there is little else than the passionate pursuit of matters intellectual to animate the creative impulses of writers; and even then, it will be little else than mere party or sectarian zeal.

A central and relatively simple quality of rationality is therefore refracted, according to the various temperaments and circumstances, either along the lines of analytical and descriptive research, going from science to realism; or in the criticism, more or less serious, of human acts and motives, where it runs from parody and comedy to satire. Analysis and reasoning, realism, criticism, comedy and satire: such are the main features of literary activity during the Restoration. There it is that this activity is seen, not only at its best, but also in its most significant light.

In the forms of pure sensibility, of ardent and tragic passion, of creative imagination; in lyricism, in drama, in epic and allegorical verse, the Restoration, certainly, can show many tentative efforts. In these kinds it often achieves creditable success, and certainly individual temperaments even come to shine in them brilliantly. But the distinctive life of this literature is not there; and one feels that these modes of expression are not suited to its genius.

Art, however, often takes refuge in the exceptional. What place must we grant to a Milton and a Bunyan in the years that follow 1660?

7. *Thwarted Tendencies.*—From 1660 to 1688, two literary currents are flowing at different depths, without merging

one into the other. The first, by far the greater, spreads elf out in the sunshine; it represents the tendencies, the works, at are in intimate harmony with the spirit of the epoch, and one truly belongs to it. The second appears on the surface at ong intervals only; it continues the past, and announces the uture. Judged by the inspiration which animates it, and by the spiritual characteristics of which it is the expression, it is in flagrant contradiction with the physiognomy of the age. It corresponds to the moral needs of a whole variety, and the most common, perhaps, of the national temperament; a variety that is being eclipsed, but at the same time has not ceased to be.

The greatest work in English literature during the reign of Charles II. is, undoubtedly, the *Paradise Lost* of Milton; and this poem, as imposing as it is solitary, is foreign to the movement surrounding it. In the same way, the *Pilgrim's Progress* of Bunyan seems to belong to another world. And if Milton has to be regarded as a survivor of the preceding age, Bunyan, by the circumstances of his life, cannot be separated from the years in which he suffered for his religious beliefs. He belongs, indeed, to the half-century when mysticism is repressed into the inner sphere of dreams.

Works such as these, and others which resemble them, can no doubt be explained as the inevitable exceptions to the standards set up by every generalisation in history; and one is able to see in them, despite their æsthetic value which is often eminent examples of those irregular and erratic facts, which set up, roun the well-ordered domains of human development, the salutar margin where the complexity of things moral still reigns suprem

However, the psychological interpretation of literary fac has to go farther. That a personality such as Milton's, form for a number of years, and nurtured by other influences, another atmosphere, should preserve the tone of its individ self after the world to which it belongs has disappeared, that *Paradise Lost* should appear during the sceptical and di lute reign of Charles II., is undoubtedly little else than one might call a normal paradox. But in addition to obvi belated writers, such as the blind poet, the Restoration con an appreciable quantity of literary expressions irreducible t dominant forces at work in the epoch. Veins of moral diss traverse the very substance of its structure. This an this and that outburst of inspiration reveal a qua

soul, a spontaneous manner of thinking and feeling, that is quite out of harmony with the tone now tyrannically imposing itself everywhere; and this lode as it were runs through the whole period. It can be easily recognised in the personality and the work of the writer who dominates, and who is the best representative of these times, John Dryden.

Strictly speaking, therefore, one must only attribute quite a relative value to the standards by which the character of each age defines itself. In so far as each of these excludes contrary characteristics, it is subject to countless exceptions; and these exceptions themselves come within the normal rule, for they are in keeping with the true life of the spirit. Inner development consists in a progressive enrichment; each phase transforms the preceding one and adds something to it, but transforms it in such a way as not to destroy it. In spite of the decisive manner in which it breaks with the past, the Restoration is unable to forget the Renascence. Not only does it preserve in its innermost self this subconscious remembrance, but it also possesses the other's creative faculties in a latent state, inhibited but always ready to reawaken; and under one form or another, through the artistic expressions of the moment, this secret quality allows itself to be seen or divined; it shows through here and there; it awakens, more pronounced, more intense in such and such an individual mind; briefly, it continues to exist; and the chapter of isolated writers, as in all the epochs of a literary rhythm henceforth fully constituted, is that in which are best seen the essential continuity, the reciprocal penetration, of the states and moments of collective consciousness.

8. *Political Unrest: 1688 and the Transition in Literature.*—The study of the literature of the last forty years of the seventeenth century has to take into account, besides the Restoration itself, two main groups of historical circumstances. The one is the gradual reappearance of political strife between 1670 and 1685, and the birth of a spirit of opposition that is hostile to the projects of the court; the other is formed by the Revolution of 1688, the setting up of a new régime, and the diverse signs of a reaction in public opinion against the manners and special modes of the Restoration.

These two groups of facts follow each other, and are in a direct line the one with the other. The first sketches a revolt of national instinct against the absolutism and Catholic leanings

of the Stuarts; the second accomplishes and develops the triumph of this revolt. The elements of distinctly moral nature which are interfused, after 1688, with the political motives, are already perceptible in germ about 1678, in the opposition of the "country party."

From the literary point of view, these deep and vigorous movements of the national mind bring about certain progressive changes in the inner quality of the Restoration. With the revival of factions and parties, and the excitement caused by the Popish Plot, a quality of force and ardour revives in civic feeling, and passes naturally into the expressions of such feeling; so that the tone of literature, as of social life, is somewhat modified. With the political and moral transformation that begins in 1688, the very keynote of English literature, as of English life, is changed. It can be said that the last years of the century form a distinct period; a brief but well-marked transition, separating the Restoration from the age of classicism.

There is some advantage in studying this transition by itself. On the contrary, the new tremors, keener and deeper, which since the reign of Charles II. disturb the passive frivolity of the Restoration, have no literary influence independent enough t call for separate study. They only supply certain useful ele ments in the individual explanation of the "dissenters" in th literature.

Thus the Restoration is entirely open to the future. Neith artistically nor psychologically does it suffice unto itself. inaugurates modes of consciousness at once simple and cle but cannot exclude different ways of feeling; it tends, as if the throes of some internal uneasiness, some secret feeling unrest, to a more balanced realisation of itself, to a more monious order, which will be seen in the more developed fo of classicism.

To be consulted: Barrett Wendell, *The Temper of the Seventeenth Cent Literature*, 1904; Beljame, *Le Public et les Hommes de Lettres en Angleterr* (1660-1744), second ed., 1897; Cazamian, *L'Evolution psychologique et la l ture en Angleterre* (1660-1914), 1920; Charlanne, *L'Influence française en terre au xviie siècle*, 1906; Courthope, *History of English Poetry*, vols. iii. 1903; Elton, *The Augustan Ages*, 1899; Garnett, *The Age of Dryden* Gosse, *From Shakespeare to Pope*, 1885; idem, *History of Eighteenth-Cent erature*, 1889; Stone, *England under the Restoration*, 1923; Taine, *Li anglaise*, vol. iii., 1866; Upham, *French Influence in English Literature fro beth to the Restoration*, 1908.

CHAPTER II

DRYDEN AND LYRICAL POETRY

1. *Dryden: the Man and his Career.*—The study of Restoration literature must begin with the poetry. This traditional order is here incontestably justified: form now comes into the foreground of the art of writing, and it is in poetry that the elaboration of form is carried farthest. In this domain the new tendencies are soonest in evidence, and have the clearest perception of their objects. Besides, the outstanding figure of this age is that of a man whose versatile genius has essayed its skill in many kinds of literature, but who is first and foremost a poet. Dryden,[1] by his example and precepts, has exercised the widest influence; he has furnished the models, as well as the doctrine, of a more careful art, in which the technique of verse is an essential element.

[1] *John Dryden, born in 1631 in Northamptonshire, studied at* Westminster School and Cambridge, and settled in London. In 1659 he published *A Poem upon the Death of His Late Highness Oliver, etc*, in 1660, the year of the Restoration, *Astræa Redux*, in 1666, immediately after the Fire of London, *Annus Mirabilis, or the Year of Wonders.* In 1663 he opened his dramatic career with a comedy, *The Wild Gallant* (see below, chap iv.). His very varied attempts as a playwright led him to define his ideas on the theatre in a number of prologues, epilogues, essays, [illegible] of the Court in a series of
[illegible] 1681, second part, by Tate
[illegible] 1682 (see below, chap iii)
[illegible] *Laici*, 1682; *The Hind and*
[illegible] icism and the Revolution, of
[illegible] t years of his life were not
[illegible] i as Homer, Virgil, Juvenal,
[illegible] accio, etc., and thus gleaned
[illegible] 3, 1694, and *Fables* of 1700,
which also contained lyrical pieces: *Threnodia Augustalis*, 1685; *To the Pious Memory of . . . Mrs. Anne Killigrew*, 1686, *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day*, 1687, *Britannia Rediviva*, 1688; *Alexander's Feast*, 1697. He died in 1700. His work, very varied, has other side-items—*Works*, ed. by W. Scott, revised by Saintsbury, [illegible] 1870; ed by Sergeaunt, 1910; *Select Poems*,
[illegible] ed. by Collins, 1893; *Essays*, ed. by Ker,
[illegible] Arnold, 1903. See biographies or studies
[illegible] tsbury (English Men of Letters), 1881,
[illegible] (*Lectures on Dryden*), 1914; Van Doren
[illegible] irdyce Nicoll (*Dryden and His Poetry*),
[illegible] ys), 1923, T S Eliot (*Homage to John Dryden*), 1924; [illegible] (*Some Notes on Dryden*) (Review of English Studies), 1925.

His personality, robust and yet mobile, somewhat difficult to grasp, is better explained in connection with the changing background of his life. The national character in him is strikingly apparent. He was born in the heart of England, of a family which had come from the north, and which for centuries had taken its place in the most central, the most typical of the English classes, the rural gentry. The hereditary title of baronet which it possessed, however, must not give rise to confusion; Dryden never belonged to the nobility. In the civil and religious struggles of the day, the sympathies of his family were with the Parliamentarians. The outcome of these distant influences he developed according to his own law. His poetic vocation seems to have been neither very early, nor very eager until the moment of the Restoration—he was then approaching the thirties. He had made the death of Cromwell the subject of a funeral oration; he penned a triumphal hymn in celebration of the king's return; and from henceforth all his feelings and his acts show plainly enough that his royalist convictions were the true expression of his nature.

His life was that of a man of letters, still anxious to win the favour of the great, but assured of a dignity of his own, on the way towards independence. Poetry, even in the form of circumstantial verse, is an uncertain source of income; the theatres, which had again opened their doors, offered a more certain career to writers of talent; the stage attracted Dryden, and for fifteen years he was the most fertile of dramatists. Married in 1663 to the daughter of the Duke of Berkshire, he became Poet Laureate in 1668, and later Royal Historiographer. A connection with the aristocracy, the support of the sovereign, and lastly success, seemed to vouchsafe for him a brilliant position.

And such he enjoyed for several years, despite some incidents. A poet of high rank, Buckingham, mocked him disdainfully on the stage (*The Rehearsal*, 1671); another, Rochester, appears to have been the instigator of an ambush in which he was cudgelled. The moment came, however, when the opportunity to play a part in politics was offered to him. The agitation caused by the Popish Plot, shortly before, in the course of the troubled years which gave rise to the names of Whig and Tory, and the growing opposition of

to the succession of the Duke of York, the Catholic brother of the king, prompted Charles II. to enlist the help of the Poet Laureate. Whether or not the theme of *Absalom and Achitophel* was suggested by his royal master, Dryden brought all the vigour of an incomparable verve to the task; and if he did not succeed in prevailing upon the judges to condemn Shaftesbury, he carried satire to a supreme degree of masterly concentration.

This is the moment when the course of his life takes a sudden bend; and it is impossible not to trace the main cause to the awakening of a conscience, till then benumbed but not inert, to religious disquietude. Without having given any premonitory sign of such an impulse, he explains in verse the reasons which lead him to prefer the Anglican faith; some years later, he refutes his first thesis, and demonstrates at great length the superiority of Roman Catholicism. In the interval, a Catholic sovereign, James II., had mounted the throne. . . . Could the inner working of Dryden's thought have led him freely from one attitude to the other? Everything permits of such a supposition; the more so, when we consider that at the Revolution of 1688, destroying as it did, with the absolutism of the Stuarts, the hopes of the nation's return to former belief, Dryden courageously puts up with the loss of his pension and of official favour, and resumes his literary tasks with true stoical dignity. His last years are among his most fruitful.

Dryden was buried in Westminster Abbey. Despite the reverses in fortune that had darkened his old age, his prestige remained intact; the Restoration had acclaimed him its greatest writer, and the new generation did not show him less respect. A party man, he had many friends among his contemporaries, just as he had enemies. Since then, he has been the object of sharp criticism; the frequent note of aggressive fervour in his opinions, his religious and political recantations, the often licentious liberty of his plays, have shocked various susceptibilities; his memory has been assailed, and has had to be defended.

One cannot be carried away by the current of his thought, or feel the spell of his virile generous personality, without being won over to an intimate persuasion of its human worth. One perceives therein a wealth of instincts that the will power has not always known how to discipline and harmonise; but the contradictions or rather the variations of this character clearly point

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back to an experience and a continuous development, the line of which has always been honestly chosen, if perhaps it has not been guided or drawn by a firm purpose. The attractiveness of this expansive and sincere nature, capable of keen resentment, but without any base ill-feeling, is seen to even greater advantage if compared with that of the writer who will succeed to his heritage: Pope, still more classical, and more artificial, with whom the conscience and scruple of the artist will be pushed even farther, but whose fund of natural tendencies will be wholly suffused with equivocal subtleties, and disturbing double-dealings.

2. *His Temperament: its Mixed Elements.*—A rich nature, gifted for easy creation, endowed with a sense of discipline and owing much to effort, but still more to a free and fruitful genius, such is the picture of himself left us by Dryden. In the march towards classicism he leads the vanguard, and arrives at what then seems to be the promised land; but he does not penetrate very far into it, does not settle there permanently, as will those to whom other horizons are unknown. He is still, as it were, a traveller, hankering after the great free stretches of landscape, and preserving his independence of mind. We must, therefore, recognise in Dryden the last and the greatest of the transitional poets, who link up the Renascence with the classical age.

No solid inference can be drawn from the fact that he was born as early as 1631, that he breathed for a long time the atmosphere of the Republic, and reached man's estate before the Restoration. Other writers, without being younger in years, will prove to be more exclusively adapted to the new age. One must, therefore, fall back upon the individual, the inexplicable in Dryden. In his temperament, Nature has laid the safest seeds of the literature of reason and order which is slowly evolving: the need for clarity, proportion and rule, the architectural instinct, the gift of logic, the demand for a definite rhythm, for a symmetrical and distinct cadence; he is of his time, and yet outpaces it, guiding it towards the future; he possesses the divining sense of the harmonious and sober construction which the art of writing has to build up on the ruins of a brilliant and undisciplined fancy. But by the side of these elements are different and even contrary impulses; survivals, reviviscences of the past, impetuous flights of the imagination, the love of vigour, be it at the expense of careful correctness, a faculty of

concrete vision, a taste for full and sonorous melody, a weakness for rare, sudden, curious felicities in thought or phrase. Many of the distinctive characteristics of the Elizabethan poetry, and all the intellectual preciosity of the first half of the seventeenth century, are to be found again in the early Dryden; and if at a later date he overcomes his preciosity, and disowns his juvenile errors, he nevertheless retains in his blood the glow of an ardour that is vanishing from his generation. The mature art he creates for himself is not of the stripped and somewhat spare type, to which a perfected technique will tend; but rather of a still sturdy, robust and strong-lived quality. The psychological sources that nurture it are not exclusively intellectual.

There is evidence then of an evolution in his career. After his first errors, and as he gradually elaborates his art, Dryden is happily served by the models he has sought out for himself. He has a sincere and keen liking for a form that is pure, for the neat line for the even balancing of a whole; he feels that the masterpieces of antiquity have these merits; he also perceives them in the writings of his French contemporaries; and no doubt these examples help him to shape out more clearly the very ideal that is only instinctively growing in his mind. In the school of the ancient and modern masters, he catches the desire and adopts the habit of a refinement in taste; and under their influence his verse, his lyricism and his dramatic art tend towards an orthodox classicism.

They were destined never to attain to it. With the full maturity of his years and of his talent, Dryden in fact shows a return to standards of greater freedom; a kind of national reaction against the slavery to foreign rules. While he has brought the typical verse form of the new poetry, the heroic couplet, to a high degree of perfection, he stops its progress short of the point beyond which the last margin of poetic licence, and the elements of variety that break the absolute regularity of the rhythm, would disappear. While he has written his plays in rhymes, he returns to blank verse. While he has extolled the unities as employed by the French, he justifies himself in not applying them rigorously. His prefaces and his essays affirm the rights of English originality; he upholds the legitimacy of employing comedy in drama, in accord with the traditional preference of the Elizabethans. He shows, to a greater extent than

contemporaries, the love for and understanding of Shake-
eare, Spenser and Chaucer. After twenty years' apprentice-
ip, Dryden, in the fullness of his strength as of his talent,
sserts the self-sufficiency of the type of art he has fashioned,
nd of which his greatest works are the illustration.

One might say that it is a mixed art; neither the pure classi-
cism which Pope will endeavour to practise, nor the pseudo-
classicism, tainted with decadent romanticism, which Dryden had
practised in his early poems; but a strong blending, in which the
essential elements of discipline and of an accepted rule combine
with the sovereign ease and boldness of inspiration. That
vigorous quality, that movement, that full sonorousness of the
great satires, of the odes, and the best portions of *Aureng-Zebe*
and *Don Sebastian*, are not only the happy successes of an excep-
tional talent; they are also the examples of an adapted but native
art, wherein English poetry would have found, perhaps, the
model of a national classicism. It is a style of compromise and
of personal but legitimate synthesis, in which the soundest and
truest liberties of the romanticists are grafted on to a general
background of order and choice; a mongrel style, as has been
said of its application to the theatre; but even there, the hybrid
product has something to show for itself. It is an art that is
aware, through a just intuition, of the relaxing and changes to
which the doctrine of strict correctness must submit, in order to
be likely to live in England.

Thus, younger than Milton, less extraordinarily robust and
secure in his inner originality, and more touched by the spirit o
the new times, Dryden none the less describes a somewhat sim
lar curve. He also, when once he has mastered his art, ha
tended, in self-commanding wisdom, towards greater libert
In a very different plane of feeling and of poetry, living in t
world and not outside of it, he has attempted more modes
the same high reconciliation. The strong fusion of logic a
creative imagination which characterises *Paradise Lost*, also c
stitutes at times, and probably in a lesser degree, the unique va
of Dryden's work. His best achievements, in his plays, b
them fairly close to the imaginative, sober, nervous art of
tain aspects of Shakespeare, as is shown in whole scenes of
Sebastian.

This classicism, truly indigenous, made of a restrainec

self-disciplined romanticism, called for gifts that are all too rare; and the movement of thought was carrying a period of reason towards the full, exclusive realisation of its type. Dryden's successors will believe that they are continuing his effort, but as a matter of fact they will relinquish it; they will disown all the past history of their literature; nor will they have the courage of their national originality. A whole century will have to elapse ere they regain it.

3. *Early Poems: Apprenticeship.*—The first poems of Dryden are interesting works. The promise of a great talent is revealed in them, from intentions, and a few actual features. But they are not decisive works. They show the faults of the past very plainly, and still more than those of the future.

Therefore, one must not read in them the triumph of the new school. These verses are devoid of any innovation; they continue a development that had then long been in progress, and that was scarcely to reach its completed stage until the publication, some twenty years later, of *Absalom and Achitophel.*

In most of these poems there is a frank display of extreme preciosity. The search for distinction, brilliancy, finesse, in a writer who will at a later date show so steady a taste, is almost fully employed in the inventing of "conceits." This disease of literature, already of long standing, is a crisis of thought, and is felt to be linked up with the efforts to grow, made by an intelligence whose ambition is thenceforward developing. The conquest of new provinces over the realm of the unconscious, such in these last years of the Renascence, as always, is the progress of mind. And this progress is here realised through a clearer perception of shades, of the subtle differences between things. By establishing curious and far-fetched relations from one object to another, by forcing comparisons, and straining the faculties of mental association to an excess, is not the intelligence best broken to its most supple play? This is felt by all; and from the end of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century, affectation in Europe becomes an epidemic, of which "metaphysical" poetry is only a particular aspect. The intellectual forces of the mind are beginning to realise their latent power, and spend themselves thus in the deft brilliant handling of images; the drill in mental refinement, necessary for the moral analyses to which the century of classicism is about to devote

elf, is inseparable from the exercise of the imagination, with hich it still remains entangled. And the pleasure which comes o the mind from these sleights renders it insensible to the pro-tests of judgment and cooler reason.

A passage in the verses penned by Dryden at the age of eighteen to mourn the death of the young Lord Hastings, his schoolfellow, is very often quoted, and deservedly.[1] About 1650 the uncertainty in matters of taste is still such, that there is nothing exceptional in prettinesses of this kind. Dryden here imitates Cowley, whose daring intellectual fantasies were just the lure that a young imagination can hardly resist. During the thirty years that intervene between this first effort in verse and the great satires, English poetry will rid itself of almost all this exuberance. The action of the French model, at once purer in form and more moderate in tone, will have a large share in this change, but no less efficient will be the inner progress in Dry-den's own artistic perception.

And this progress is very soon noticeable. The stanzas wri ten in memory of Cromwell have an oratorical swing, a vigou a note of sincerity, which it would be unjust to question; in t person of the Protector, it is the greatness of England tha venerated by Dryden, and whose fatal eclipse he here mou he will always be a very ardent patriot; at the same time errors in taste, and a somewhat laboured awkwardness, show the apprentice at work. *Astræa Redux* has a greater ness of touch, more solidity, an animated flow that is sk sustained, but again the poem has many inequalities. *Mirabilis*, despite its faults, is the strongest work of Dr his first manner of writing, and here he reveals hims undoubted master of the new poetry.

Certainly preciosity, the "metaphysical" devices, as said[2] of the school to which classicism is about to pu are not absent from this work. A succession of epi brilliant passages, the poem can scarcely be said to real unity. It falls very low at times. But the inspira sustains these three hundred four-line stanzas has an vigour. While the imagination of the poet too often

[1] Hastings died of an eruptive malady. "Each little pimple," "had a tear in it, To wail the fault its rising did commit."

[2] Dryden himself in 1693 invented this epithet, and applied it ...d especially Johnson set it in vogue.

it shows at other times a striking power of evocation; and despite the somewhat short movement of the measure, the whole of this diversified narration is enlivened by a touch of historical and even epic emotion. The choice of the images is now suggested by old-time authors, whom Dryden imitates or adapts in his capacity of a faithful humanist; now, and usually with greater felicity, by personal and direct vision; as, for example, the comparison of the hare and the hound worn out by their running (stanzas 131-2), which has an appealing force, and a tone of raciness. The picture of the fleet and of the sea battles is lively and picturesque, but the reader feels in it the presence of a certain improvisation, and a lack of experience; that of the city where the noisy crowd is swarming in the glare of the conflagration, is worthy of its great theme. The final perspective of London rising again from its ashes has a fine amplitude of vision; and the style, by an instinctive harmony which reveals the born writer, supports these intense passages with accents of solemn full dignity.

Dryden has brought the English classical line to its perfection, and supplied Pope with his instrument. But his tastes as a metrist are not confined to the absolutely regular cadence of the couplet. No doubt, *Astræa Redux*, and most of the short early poems, are written in this measure; here Dryden shows himself to be the worthy heir of Waller and Denham; despite some hesitation still, and a few serious errors, this form of verse has already the firm strength of an implement for poetic argumentation, the use of which reinforces one through the other the regular sureness of the measure and the balanced lucidity of the thought. This weapon for irony and controversy will be again employed by Dryden in his great satires and didactic works. But he has a sense of other melodies, and freer; his ear, during these years of apprenticeship, seems to be haunted by the purely lyrical rhythm of the quatrain with alternate rhyming lines. *Annus Mirabilis*, and the stanzas to the memory of Cromwell, are written in this measure, of which d'Avenant after Davies had given the example in *Gondibert*. Although it is not, perhaps, suited to the demands of a long poem, it serves the elegiac intentions of the writer with much felicity in particular passages. All that there remains of the romanticist in the early Dryden, and the broad affinities of his nature with the wealth of

ic evocation, are thus displayed. The close of his career a return to the same instincts.

The Lyricism of the Years of Maturity.—This does not to say that the phase of Dryden's career when he concen- on drama stifles this vein of spontaneous lyricism, in which emperament is still linked up with that of the preceding age. e and there in his plays are scattered short songs, light and, imes, inspired stanzas, which then have the soaring happi- s, and a touch of the charming youthfulness of the Cavalier ets.

The satires and didactic poems, from 1681 to 1687, display complete mastery of versification, a quality that is more easily elt than defined. Technical analysis can hardly, by itself, reveal he secret. The structure of Dryden's couplet, if compared with that of Pope's, undoubtedly has certain particular features to offer: the greater part still conceded to flexibility, a margin of variation in the rhythmical design; a few incomplete lines, ending at the hemistich, some alexandrines, the persistence of the triplet or series of three lines with a single rhyme, which metrists will readily condemn, but which with its effect of a lengthened utterance, or of a parenthesis and provisional conclusion, is often a happy asset; and lastly the remarkable freedom of the pauses, which closely fit the movement of the thought. But it is in this movement itself that one must look for the deep source of that full and vigorous vitality which is the animating force in the poetry of Dryden. Created in one and the same act, the measure and the idea are equally forceful, compact, easy, striking, because the mind of the poet possesses itself freely, and moves with facility among brilliant vivid ideas, and because the form come as the natural dress with which these are spontaneously investe

Dryden's satires belong to a group of works, from whi it would be as well not to separate them (see Chapter iii.). H didactic poems rank among the most successful examples of thankless kind; the vigour of his genius, the gift which he p sessed to a supreme degree of reasoning and arguing in ve and his religious zeal, newly awakened to a more intense raise the debate above the arid plain in which controversy willingly lingers. *Religio Laici* owes to the concentrated of virile reflection a singular, grave and noble beauty, ani at moments by a philosophic ardour, while a restrained

ination adds to the whole the subdued glow of a lyricism that is purely moral. More ample and more explicit, the ingenious symbolism of *The Hind and the Panther* is not free from reproach; the main theme—that of all fables—the merging of the animal world in that of man, is carried at times to that paradoxical degree where the ideas can no longer be kept from clashing with the images. Rather loose in its texture, the poem is not free from prolixity. But while Dryden takes sides, and cannot remain impartial, he spares the dignity of Anglicanism, which he had just before upheld, and makes a sincere effort to be fair. The clearness of the thought, the direct energy of the expression, the smooth movement, the robust quality of the maxims coined by the poet in his effortless manner, the rhythm, regular but not monotonous; graceful or pleasing episodes, a fresh and, as it were, powerfully naive sincerity, a nervous and subtle argumentative skill, which the poetic cadence sustains and does not appear in any way to hamper, all make of this unequal work one of the eminent expressions of Dryden's genius.

The odes and lyrical poems of the last fifteen years (1685 to 1700) form a last outstanding group. Here we have true inspiration struggling to express itself, with an attention to style that is often too minute and artificial. The Pindaric model, as interpreted by Cowley, supplied the English poets with a pattern at once solemn and somewhat arbitrary, which tempted the pens of all but a few writers of the time. *Threnodia Augustalis,* to the memory of King Charles II., and *Britannia Rediviva*, composed on the occasion of the birth of the future Pretender, the son of James II., are official exercises of the Poet Laureate; there is, however, in the first piece, written not without vigour, in very ample stanzas, and in lines of extremely unequal length, a general impression of order and proportion that is pleasing enough; the orchestration has movement, and the harmony swells or fades with brilliant virtuosity. More spontaneous of note, the famous *Alexander's Feast* is a still somewhat too clever masterpiece in imitative harmony; the flexibility, the variety, the wealth of rhythmic resources, and of the suggestive or descriptive methods employed, show the incomparable gifts of Dryden as a versifier. The *Ode for Saint Cecilia's Day* (1687), composed in all the heat of his recent conversion to Roman Catholicism, is purer in form, and of a more communicative musical

and sweetness. But it is perhaps in a piece of a more nal character, the *Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Anne Killi-* , that Dryden strikes his most touching chords; no one can without wonder the beginning and the close of this poem, h are full of an ardour and a grandeur of lyric vision, in ch we feel the breath of modern romanticism, while they all the mystic exaltation of the sacred poets of the seventeenth ntury.

The moving appeal of this ode; the attractive note of mor an one effusion, be it of a gay nature, such as we find in the *Epistle to My Kinsman, John Dryden*, or full of a virile sadness, as in the verses to the memory of Oldham the satirist; the noble dignity with which the aged Dryden hails the rising glory of Congreve, or, dealing with the charges of Collier against a corrupt stage, strikes a balance between their exaggeration and their justice, without forgetting his own faults—all go to show us a poet whose inspiration is largely human, and who is very far removed, here again, from the impersonal objectivity towards which classicism was to tend in its theoretical purity. Lastly, it is worthy of note that in several passages of these later compositions there are lines written in "triple" measure (anapæstic, etc.), as if the free instinct of the metrist in Dryden was yielding to the spell of a cadence at that time out of favour, but one that is so restful to the ear, after the iambic rhythm and the short hammering of the couplet.

5. *The Literary Theory of Dryden.*—Just as Dryden is th master, so is he a theorist of the new poetry. A clear thinke he has pondered the rules of his art; he has sought them in t works of the ancients, in those of the French, in nature as in preted by his own temperament; his various essays, prefa epistles, prologues, and epilogues inaugurate in England mo literary criticism, and propound, not without certain strong sonal touches, the doctrine of classicism then in its opening

The style of these treatises marks a date in the develo of English prose, and on this account they should be con with the other texts where this progress is most app Several among them—the most important perhaps—de dramatic art or satire, and they will be studied elsewher these headings. But when we collect the scattered rer

[1] See below, chap. v. sect. 5.

Dryden on the rules of the craft of writing, we obtain an outline of general poetics; and the traces of his cult of the ancients are to be found everywhere in his work.

A word should be said here with regard to his translations in verse. They are plentiful, and show with what ease Dryden could handle the instrument he had forged. That of Juvenal is not entirely his own effort; that of the Iliad is only begun—Fate reserved the task of translating Homer to Pope; those of Persius, Ovid and Virgil are a monument of the poet's skill and flexible talent. His Æneid is unequal; temperamentally Dryden is more inclined to be energetic and passionate than gentle and suave; he keys up the story so as to bring out sheer pathos, the dramatic element, and the narrative interest; he accentuates and strains the discretion of Virgilian effects. His version of the Georgics is, in a way, more solid and regular; the sober dignity of the subject is better understood and respected. The nervous and full conciseness of the expression lends to the whole a very pleasurable quality; and while the translation has the freedom, the very relative accuracy, which were satisfactory to the taste of the time, it transposes the rural poem into a tone that is not in absolute dissonance with the original. At the worst, one notices as in the Bucolics a rusticity that is more marked and somewhat coarser, and a more familiar realism, than is discoverable in the lines of Vergil.

Dryden was in truth a humanist at heart. His opinions on the Latin satirists reveal a penetrating finesse. But when he comes to speak of the writers of his own country, his judgments evince the same insight. He has a natural sanity of taste, a sound and straightforward perception of the deeper character of men; and from the very first one feels that if his measure of æsthetic values is most often exact, it arises from the fact that it is guided by an intuitive grasp of the psychological and moral realities which are at the base of every work. Prepared thus for broad and direct criticism, Dryden strengthened this gift by providing himself with the extensive, but in no wise systematic, culture of a scholar; he never acquired erudition.

Despite their deficiencies and their weak points, his treatises supply the first model of the kind in England. Their doctrine is that of the French classicists, but inflected in a modern and national sense. The influence of French critics, such as Le

the English "more capable of virile thought" (*Epistle to Motteux*), show to what extent the consciousness of national originality reaches deep and is irreducible in the mind of Dryden. Briefly, his doctrine, while it is rationalistic, is also realistic; accepting the fact of the individuality of a people and of its genius, it limits thereby the dangerous authority of pure reason.

6. *Lyric Poets of the Restoration.*—Among the contemporaries of Dryden, with writers whose personalities are less robust, the characteristics of the new age are more rigorously in evidence. The Restoration poets, on the average, are less complex by nature, and are less deeply linked up with a national tradition. They are dominated by the influences of their day: that of an age of dryness, when the natural outpouring of a singing soul tends to become a paradoxical exception; and that of an aristocratic and artificial society, in which only such themes are favoured as harmonise with the fashionable scepticism of a life of pleasure.

Almost all of noble birth, the rhymers of madrigals, treatises in verse and odes, who wrote in the dazzling and frivolous splendour of Charles the Second's court, or in the waning colder glow that lit up that of James, were for long considered as true poets. Established with the triumph of classicism, and in conformity with it, the official measure of literary values was registered during the eighteenth century in those voluminous anthologies which, neglecting a "barbarous" past, have transmitted to posterity the least poetical efforts of an age of culture. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, accepting this traditional cult with undisguised reluctance, make it already feel in the heyday of its power the edge of a clear good sense and of a sound frank judgment. Since then, the perspectives of English poetry have undergone a thorough change; and the courtier rhymers of the years of the last Stuarts have fallen to the rank of mere curiosities for the scholar.

This condemnation, a little summary, must in its turn be revised. Over the secondary poets of the Restoration, singularly shifting lights, no doubt, have been brought to play; under the changeful ray, many figures that formerly attracted notice have vanished into darkness; while others, whose features have been lighted up by a more generous curiosity or a more active sympathy, have assumed a more marked and new relief. On the

Bossu, Rapin, and later Boileau, is less paramount on Dryden than on some of his contemporaries; he does not become, like Rymer, the passive adept of the "rules." To Corneille he shows deep respect; but the technique of his own plays evolves from submission to independence. The imitation of nature and truth, the model of which was supplied by the ancients, and which any novice can learn in their school; the identification of literary pleasure with the satisfaction of rational demands (*A Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy*), such is the gospel of Dryden. It is also that of European classicism. It offers, however, an original feature, in that it insists readily on the shades of difference which time brings to the fundamental persistence of nature, and on the right of the newcomers to be the best judges, and the best painters, of the truth of their own century. The Elizabethans themselves, says the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy,* may have exhausted one kind of perfection; they have left us another. In the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, though Dryden does not side with the innovators, he cannot be said, on the other hand, to agree with the exclusive patrons of tradition. He is not afraid of saying that Chaucer is greater than Ovid. Full of the doctrine of the ancients, he bends it to a free and fruitful adaptation; and his creative instinct outruns and explains away the last scruples of the thinker.

Such is indeed the character of his maxims on the art of playwriting, which we find scattered here and there, which are somewhat wavering in their doctrine, but whose unity resides in a very definite central line of evolution; and of his ideas on the precise problems of poetry. About rhyme, which he strongly defends, and then gives over for the theatre; about the various rhythms, language, and the unities, which he has interpreted in a broad sense, Dryden has spoken as one for whom the destiny of English literature lies in finding, through the same paths as French classicism, a golden age which the genius of the Elizabethans, despite its marvellous intuitions, did but approach; but in whose opinion the example of these old masters is both salutary and indispensable, because they have written and thought according to the profound instincts of their race. Such verses as those in which Dryden extols, against the "regular and thin" perfection of French art, against the characteristics of the French language "weakened by over-refinement," the vigour of

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whole, a better advised criticism nowadays tends to tone down such exaggerated discredit by many exceptions.

The dead parts of this literature are traceable chiefly to impulses that are wholly intellectual. Three main themes are dominant: gallantry; the sustained dignity of an abstract argumentation; the vehemence of a philosophic ardour. Love poems, didactic poems, "Pindaric" poems, whether they seek animation and wit, reasonable cogency, or the sublime, are all chilled by the same cold atmosphere. Passion is scarce in them, and feeling exceptional; scarce also is the heat of a strong imagination, that can grasp the realities of the soul or of the world, and communicate their moving appeal.

With those who were chiefly attracted by the prestige of the ode, hardly a spark now testifies to the extinguished fire. The learned compositions of Cowley's imitators make up one of the most unprofitable chapters in the history of incipient classicism. A Sprat,[1] a Montague, Earl of Halifax,[2] for long made a figure through their ambitious efforts; but they are now unreadable.

Not less disappointing is the vein of the authors of treatises in verse. But these do not aim at any laboured and merely verbal sublimity; they are only plagued with dryness; their calm inspiration leaves room for the successful care of form. Since translating the ancients is in fashion, the Earl of Roscommon[3] composes a rhymed essay on the art of translation in verse, and himself renders in blank verse the *Ars Poetica* of Horace. The Duke of Buckinghamshire[4] writes an *Essay on Poetry*, that finds great favour among his contemporaries; and not without reason, because it represents in fact a very creditable grouping together of average qualities, while providing a clear and pleasant exposition of sensible ideas with a limited scope. There is no work that better reveals the implicit postulates, the deep-ingrained prejudices of this generation; the pursuit and the realisation of beauty are wholly governed by rules of wisdom, prudence and judgment. Imagination, the creative energy of the writer, do not seem to be taken into account.

[1] Thomas Sprat (1635-1713), Bishop of Rochester and historian of the Royal Society: *Poems*, Chalmers and Johnson's *English Poets*, vol. ix.
[2] Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax (1661-1715): *Poems*, Chalmers, vol. ix.
[3] Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon (1633-85): *Poems*, Chalmers, vol. viii.
[4] John Sheffield, Duke of Buckinghamshire (1648-1721): *Essay on Poetry*, 1682; second ed., 1691.

The love theme, and its usual vehicle, the madrigal, are everywhere in evidence. Here the needs of the heart are paid but slight attention, and delicacy is too often put to shame; for the superficial lightness of the emotion only serves to cover a rather heavy sensuality. On the other hand, these mediocre strains have at times a pleasing turn. There is still a certain aristocratic quality about this literature of gallantry, so inferior to that of the preceding age, but in which a gift for language still persists. A will to refinement, and the influence of recent English or French models, are added to a natural distinction, and gloss over the poor quality of the matter. All the talents that Court life demands—wit, the ready and correct reply, the care of expression, clearness of thought, regularity in the metrical arrangement of the line—give to these exercises in verse a polish that bespeaks elegance and good taste.

But only a polish . . . Just as the wit is at times forced, so the politeness is often only a mere outward show. In comparison with the light verse of the seventeenth or eighteenth century in France, that of the Earl of Dorset,[1] for example, betrays an intimate difference in quality. It is not entirely of its own choice that it is amiable and well-bred. Its amenities are strangely contradicted by flashes of violent realism. And truly one is at a loss to know whether in all these aristocratic displays of gallantry, the momentary outbreaks of brutality are more annoying by reason of the discordant note they strike, or relieve us more through their very candour.

But there is no gulf separating the Restoration from the great lyrical century of the English Renascence. The one is the continuation of the other, and prolongs its decline. Now that these old collections of the Courtier poets have been better examined, they have yielded more than one gem, and indeed enough to key up the very tonality of the period, and to give it a richer colouring. The psychological temperament of another age, a fund of impulse as well as of instinct, which may appear to have been effaced or concealed, but which nevertheless secretly subsists, suddenly reappears. In the pages of these worldly rhymers, there are moments, touches of poetry and of true feeling; and among them are not a few who by nature have the gift

[1] Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, Earl of Dorset (1638-1706): author of light poetry and satires. *Poems*, Chalmers, vol. viii.

of song, and whose sentiment, even in its light-heartedness, rises of itself into melody.

That rake Rochester[1] has his hours of tender effusion, and has written some charming little poems. Roscommon imitates La Fontaine in an *Ode on Solitude*, where he touches some deeper chords of feeling. From the pen of Mrs. Behn[2] we have examples of a pretty lyricism. But the most happily gifted temperament of this group is that of Sir Charles Sedley.[3] His is a striking felicity of easy images, of flowing graceful expression; he has an "inevitable" neatness of phrasing, lively, running rhythms, which ironical or artfully sensual inspiration seems to have created on the spur of the moment. He dashes off many a little masterpiece, of a kind in which perfection is delightful, but indispensable. The truth of that inner attitude, which had given a genuine ring to the saucy or libertine elegies of the Cavalier poets, is here perpetuated in this man of pleasure, who, losing all illusions, has kept an exceptional talent; and the spirit of a more conscious classicism gives a more finished turn to his creations, without depriving them of their freshness.

On the other hand, a literature of witty cynicism or frigid gallantry can have a poetry proper to itself; and this resides in the lucid and somewhat dry, but sincere intensity of a bitter, disillusioned outlook on life. The pessimism of intelligence wells out in the midst of all this feast of the senses, and there are notes which arrest us by the force of their truth. What Rochester has written is never indifferent; because he has amongst them all a manner that is at once the most French, the most elegant, and the most skilful; and because in his work there crops up a fund of clear-sighted observation, a scepticism with regard to the ambitious hopes of reason, a something that recalls Butler[4] and at the same time announces Swift. His *Satire against Mankind*, a free and original imitation of Boileau, is a piece of *bravura* in which we detect a serious intent. The ease of his argumentation, the neatness of his epigrams, realise at times the ideal itself of classical poetry: the incisive, cadenced

[1] John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1647-80): *Collected Works*, ed. by J. Hayward, 1926. See Forgues, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, August-September 1857.

[2] Mrs. Aphra Behn (1640-89): her best poems figure as interludes in her plays. See below, chap. iv. sect. 4.

[3] Sir Charles Sedley (1639-1701): *Poetical Works*, 1707. See the study by Lissner, 1905 (*Anglia*, vol. 28); V. de S. Pinto, *Sir Ch. Sedley*, 1927.

[4] See further, chap. iii. sect. 2.

expression of a perfectly clear idea. He stands out from among all the poetasters and fast livers of his class through the acrid distinction of a mind which intense and free experience precociously destroyed, but not without refining and sharpening it.

No epoch can be said to be morally simple and one. Just as this generation has its echoes of the Renascence, its reminiscences of a lyric past both ardent and youthful, it shows as well some premonitions of the future. Nahum Tate,[1] a "bourgeois" poet, conscientious and mediocre, who had the honour of collaborating with Dryden in the second part of *Absalom*, reveals to us, before 1688, the temper in which the moralising literature of the next age was shaping itself. His pointless verse owes its interest to this documentary quality. There is a touch of sentimentalism in his lines, a virtuous indignation, a hint of the facile pathos in which the eighteenth century will delight. Certain poems, as, for example, his *Melancholy* or *The Midnight Thought*, anticipate Young. His psalms in verse enjoyed a long popularity. And those elements that will go to nourish the first silent preparation of romanticism are here perceptible. . . .

Flatman[2] is more convincing, because he has more talent. With him, the strong and serious inspiration, the grave thoughts of a mind meditating upon death, heighten the prosaic tone of the language, and create a lyricism of striking truth. The sincerity of sentiment is even capable of animating the Pindaric style, lending it a nobleness that it had so often sought in vain. With the great elaborate poems of Dryden, and some few pieces—as Sedley's *Ode Written in a Garden*—it is Flatman, in the best passages of *Retirement* or of his funeral dirges, who best justifies the existence of this bastard kind. And with that he possesses a faculty of effusion, natural enough to succeed occasionally in turning out madrigals, of a haughty and severe style that recalls the school of Malherbe. A poet, when talent prompts him, he often falls below himself; for the quality of his verve is very unequal, and reflects the essential instability of successful lyricism in an age of prose.

[1] Nahum Tate (1652-1715): *Poems on Several Occasions*, 1677; *Psalms in Metre* (by Tate and Brady), 1696.

[2] Thomas Flatman (1637-88). *Poems and Songs*, 1674. See Saintsbury, *Minor Poets, etc.*, vol. iii., 1921; F. A. Child, *Life and Uncollected Poems of Thomas Flatman*, 1922.

And yet, a literary age is an abstraction. Upon a complex and changing woof, in which the threads of the past interweave themselves with those of the future, each period, as it were, stands out in a dominant and simple tone. This unity is not an illusion; but it exists above all the mind that seeks to simplify everything, and resolves itself upon more careful examination into innumerable shades. Such is, particularly, the case of the "classical" ages in English literature. The psychological elements of a subconscious romanticism are everywhere present, without discontinuity, at the very heart of the spirit of this time, linking up the past with the future; each probing and testing makes them reappear; and above all in this social reality, the meditative religious temperament of a middle class, that has remained in great part immune from the corrupting influences of the aristocracy.

To be consulted: *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. viii. chaps. i. viii. ix.; Johnson, *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, 1781; Garnett, *The Age of Dryden*, 1895; Courthope, *History of English Poetry*, vol. iii., 1903; Gosse, *History of Eighteenth-Century Literature*, 1889; A. L. Reed, *The Background of Gray's Elegy*, 1924; Saintsbury, *Minor Poets of the Caroline Period*, 3 vols., 190[5]-21; idem, *History of English Prosody*, vol. ii., 1908.

CHAPTER III

SATIRE AND SATIRICAL SPIRIT

1. *The Restoration and the Satirical Spirit.*—The great influences of the time unite to make the Restoration an age of satire. A society where the various forms of worldly life are in the ascendant raises to its highest point the respect of conventional values; and while orthodox morality suffers an eclipse, fashion and genteel taste in return hold undivided sway. The rational tone of thought helps to disentangle and formulate all rules; and the clearness of the principles renders their application more easy. Judging and condemning, as a result, grow more simple and more facile operations. In the exclusive circle of the cultured, the art of expressing one's judgment in literary terms becomes a highly natural exercise of the critical faculty; and the appeal to enlightened opinion is an unfailing means to acquire prestige and success.

On the other hand, with the re-establishment of the monarchy there breaks out an insurrection of instincts that have long been held in check; the revolt against austerity is accompanied by a reaction against hypocrisy; and the spirit of mockery or of satire brings with it to those consciences that are becoming liberated the feeling of sincerity, as well as that of independence. The open denunciation of false spiritual authorities becomes not only a duty, but a pleasure; and if with the desire for sanity there mingles the relish for licentiousness, if the audacity of thought, and the frankness of utterance, deviate into cynicism, this is only a reaction so natural that no one is tempted to wonder at it. The Restoration satirists are most often realistic and crude, just as they are biting to a degree; for, generally speaking, they are not very sure whether they are writing in the name of morality and in its defence, or against it, against the notion that others have formed of it. . . .

Political strife also accounts for the violence of tone. The

Civil War, and the Protectorate, had known the most violent polemics; Milton had fought as desperately as any other. But in the controversies of the various sects, the vehemence sprang from the earnestness of the passion and the idea. The Restoration materialises and lowers even these conflicts. When political opposition is again stirred up, and the skirmishing of pamphlets flames up anew, party spirit replaces religious zeal. The battle s here transferred to another plane; and the ardour which ormerly spent itself in fulminating and learned treatises, now ours itself forth in lampoons and satires. Henceforth, Whigs ind Tories will engage in a pen war for the benefit of public pinion.

But there is something else at work in the literary atmoshere of the time. Classical influences favour a mode of xpression which the tradition of the ages has consecrated. In ncient days the satirist was honoured; the study of the classics s now promoting familiarity with the works of Persius, Horace and Juvenal; these old masters are translated and imitated; did they not aim their shafts at the eternal enemies of wisdom, and was the man of those days in any way different from the man of to-day? Before long, the contemporary mind awakes to the piquancy of anachronism, and of a suggestively bold application, or of an adaptation that lends a happily modern note to the things of the past. Besides, satire is in fashion with the French, and Boileau is its brilliant exponent. Thus is revived a scholarly and somewhat artificial style of writing, that in England could claim the precedents of Hall and Donne.

Whether sustained by a popular inspiration, and springing from the conflicts of social life, or the outcome of a reflective impulse, satire in England will enjoy until the close of the classical era a long and full life, rich in spontaneous fruits, and also in rather artificial products, according as the dominant influence is political hatred and aggrieved sentiment, or motives of abstract morality. Full of rank force and acidity under the Restoration, it will often disclaim any personal intent, but will almost always deal in personalities; and the relative sincerity of the satirical impulse will create new forms for itself, while infusing new life into the traditional forms.

2. *Samuel Butler: "Hudibras."*—We know little about the life of the author of *Hudibras;* still less about the man in Butler,

with the result that one of the most interesting figures of this age remains in many respects an enigma.[1]

The first and very great success of his work is closely bound up with the Restoration itself, and points to an immediate harmony with the tastes of the cultivated public, the greater part of which by far was hostile to the memory of a defeated Puritanism. The long interval which elapses after the second part, the indifference which greets the third, the silence and neglect into which Butler seems to have fallen, betray both the uncertainties of a poem which, proceeding with no definite plan in view, remains an unfinished work and the new preoccupations that are absorbing the minds of the time, after all the mockery and cynicism of a dawn which had seemed to herald a golden age.

In the days of the Civil War, when people were massacring each other "without knowing why," we see Sir Hudibras, the grotesque and corpulent knight of a hot-headed, quarrelsome cause, sallying out in company with his squire Ralph, who rides at his side. The first is a Presbyterian, the second an Independent; and their continual arguing recalls to life again an epoch when sect opposed sect in endless strife. Sprinkling their mishaps with mutual sermons, the two compeers ride forth to court adventure; pursuing a showman with his bear, who stirs up all the Puritan ire of Hudibras, now victorious, now defeated, cudgelled, imprisoned, liberated, they pass from episode to episode, just as it pleases a story which the poet himself does not take seriously. Sir Hudibras falls in love with a widow, and after receiving learned advice from an astrologer, suddenly

[1] [illegible] was born in 1612 in Worcester- [illegible] did not enjoy, it would appear, [illegible] uired his very wide scholarship from his reading, occupied several subordinate posts as scribe or clerk in the employ of Elizabeth, Countess of Kent, and of Sir Samuel Luke, a Puritan squire [illegible]. He was a student of law and a keen observer of contemporary [illegible] d shortly after [illegible] et with great [illegible] time, scarcely [illegible] in retirement, [illegible] eaving behind [illegible] guarantee as [illegible] sent problems [illegible] 1905-8; third [illegible] ohnson, 1893. [illegible] vol iii., 1903; [illegible] studies), 1923. [illegible] une, February [illegible]

he vein of comedy which he works up is considerably varied, f a very mixed quality; the finest elements mingle in it with oarsest; an erudition as huge as it is incongruous feeds it the drollest allusions, while the author's keen moral rvation enriches it with a profound sense of all the aspects soul's self-deceit. Never have the innermost recesses of conscious egoism, or of that folly in human nature which is te unaware of itself, been so cruelly explored and revealed. esented in formulæ of a piquant compactness, this bitter perience is spontaneously amusing, and deftly plays with the t that lies in words as with that which lies in ideas. But the straint it constantly exercises over itself, its power of cold and pparently impassible expression, the delightful discrepancy that ontinually enhances the comic value of things, through their ncongruous, indirect, and transposed presentment, lend to the whole poem an undeniably humorous character. A fertile inventor of puns, epigrams, and lashing mockery, an expert, like Rabelais, in the full-flavoured art of vocables, Butler is also one of the masters of humour.

That is to say, his work has in it a wealth of intention, a fund of thought, only revealed by way of an implicit suggestion, and which is not easy to thoroughly explore The philosophy of *Hudibras* works itself out in several successive planes; and its contours are difficult to determine. The work is first of all, and undoubtedly, a scathing indictment against the Puritan régime, and against the moral temper upon which it had been raised. Sensual and cowardly, pedantic and covetous, Sir Hudibras has in him all the weaknesses of the flesh, whilst his vain pretension to the virtues of conscience is the most ludicrous hypocrisy His grotesque pride as a magistrate is in keeping with the obstinacy of his squire, who is a mystic enthusiast; and the one like the other brings to the service of his sectarian zeal a cunning glibness of tongue and the arrogance of a demented arguing power The hostile picture of a religious, political and social age i complete in these two types, and in their reciprocal reactio But a kind of inner logic carries the satire much farther. if he obeyed the need of unreserved self-expression, Butl develops to their utmost range the themes he has here set hi self to treat; with the result that very soon it is no longe question of one single epoch, or of one doctrine; the po

becomes a general criticism of society, of thought, and of man.

The links connecting up these digressions with the main subject are to be found in the central theme of insincerity of Puritan affectation. This latter is disguised in a special pedanticism, a biblical jargon, as well as in a pretended austerity of manners. In the mind of Butler a fusion takes place between the pedantic lie of theological Puritanism, and all the vain pretensions of human science. The suggestions of certain literary models, the example of Rabelais, all the enthusiasm of modern rationalism, which for a century had been gradually growing stronger, and rising against the methods of intellectual authority, make of *Hudibras* a belated satire on Scholasticism. Not only is the hero a man of corpulent size, but his head is puffed up with abstruse knowledge; he and Ralph bandy with each other all kinds of incongruous learning. But it is not only the effort to know, and the very exercise of thinking, that thus appear sullied by radical errors and vanities; the false glamour of knowledge is paralleled everywhere by false values; churches, spiritual authorities, governments, social forms, institutions, rules of life, nothing can withstand the merciless inroads of the most corrosive intellectual sourness.

Where does Butler lead us? How far does the sly vigour of his destructive jeering want to go? To absolute scepticism, or to a prudent and moderate good sense? To unrelieved pessimism, or to a disillusioned wisdom? It is doubtful whether he himself has a very clear conception of the limits of his denials, and of the positive affirmations at which his thought may still snatch. Among the diverse works attributed to his pen, those whose authenticity is beyond all doubt throw some light upon this problem, but not enough to dissipate all darkness. In his short poems, several of which are satires, and in his *Characters* the personality revealed is indeed that of the author of *Hudibras,* but perhaps more supple, less uniformly strung up to wreak a will of irony and scorn. It seems as if the rage and intoxication of seeing through all things had not withered away all his convictions; nor does he appear to have experienced like Swift, whom he seems to announce in so many respects, the maddening sense of solitude in a barren moral world. If he has upbraided all religious denominations, he seems to imply, and indeed he

sometimes says, that Anglicanism is the least unreasonable of beliefs; if he saps all the conventions upon which the monarchy rests, he has nevertheless written and lived as a partisan of the restored Stuarts. And while the Royal Society itself does not escape his mockery, he has spoken of reason with all the respect of a man to whom the hatred of false science is but the manifestation of his love for the true.

Are these solutions final, or only temporary? Is his thought pledged to them, or are they but the calculated decisions of his sense of utility? One has the impression that, all things considered, Butler maintains an attitude in which is visible that English fund of practical empiricism, of which "pragmatism" is but the present form; that he accepts as lesser evils the intellectual or social necessities of life, and submits, in a certain measure, his uncompromising need of truth to their discipline. But this is a joyless resignation; and although one must not be led to see a Romanticist in Butler, one's ear catches in his work an accent that is unmistakable. Emerging in his mature years into an atmosphere of rationality, but obsessed by the recent experience of a vast collective fit of unreason, he exhausted himself in denouncing a past even then abolished. He repeatedly struck at dead enemies, Puritanism and Scholasticism, without being able to turn towards a future which his intellectual temperament was especially suited to understand. To this bent of his thought he owes the violent character of his satirical genius, the main feature of which is an ironical sneer at everything; and it is in this light that one must view him, without stopping at the partial abdications to which his free critical sense, under pressure of vital exigencies, had to consent. He thus retains the character of an incomplete, but original and robust artist; of a thinker arid, but strong, and singularly modern.

3. *Political Satire: Marvell, Oldham.*—Under the Restoration the domain of political satire is vast and crowded; and only the scholar can explore all its corners. Great names, brilliant or powerful works stand out above a multitude of pamphlets and invectives, which in the most varied forms express one and the same fund of virulent enmity; where intense words fail to give any artistic relief to the monotony of these outpourings of hatred.

It is the art of the satirist which alone counts here. The

eling shines out through all disguises (*Britannia and Raleigh*, *ialogue between Two Horses*, etc.). In a language of extraor-nary raciness, and a popular tone, with a raw realistic touch, ne rage and shame of an England that has been humiliated, nslaved, and contaminated by foreign vices and fashions are here expressed. Such feelings were still exceptional, but their contagious influence was spreading obscurely. As if the new spirit in poetry supplied him with his instrument of expression, Marvell writes most often in heroic couplets; but his unpolished verse, capable of surprising vigour, has not the necessary suppleness or regularity, and rather reminds one at times of the simple ballad rhythms. The irresistible virtue of a lofty soul, of a heart embittered but obsessed by noble regrets and high thoughts, nevertheless imbues these strange poems with an energy of movement and phrase, with an eloquence, that make them one of the most eminent examples of English political satire.

John Oldham[1] is another strong and harsh talent; though with him one cannot but notice how the literary aim of the writer, and even his tricks of phrasing, intensify the spontaneous vivacity of his passion. His satirical temperament offered a natural affinity with that of Juvenal; a fact of which he was fully conscious, and which told upon his manner. His profession brought him into close touch with the Latin classics; he trans lated them (for example, the episode of Byblis, from the Nint Book of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid) and above all adapte them. Boileau had shown what profit the new literature cou draw from voluntary anachronism as a means of art. Ro ester, in a playful mood, had followed this example (*Allus to the Tenth Satire of the First Book of Horace*, 1678); O ham followed it more deliberately. His preface to the *Poetica* of Horace, which he imitated in English (1681) very explicit: after Ben Jonson and Roscommon, to again t late this poem might not have been excusable, had not an e tial novelty been realised by putting Horace into a more m

[1] John Oldham (1653-83), the son of a dissenting minister, was born in C tershire and studied at Oxford, an usher, then teacher, in a school, he pa short life in dependent positions He wrote amorous verse, pindaric ode lated or adapted Juvenal, Boileau, etc, composed satires (*A Satyr against A Satyr upon a Woman, etc.*; four *Satyrs upon the Jesuits*, 1681, *A Satyr ing Poetry; A Satyr addressed to a Friend, that is about to leave the U etc.*). *Poetical Works*, ed by Bell, 1854. See Courthope, *History o Poetry*, vol. iv., 1903.

grandeur, on the stage, is so constant, and such a
that it is unnecessary to dwell upon it. Nothing is easier
to underline the defects of Dryden's heroic tragedies. Let it
fice to say that they are great, and such as one would expect.

But their outer and, as it were, surface romanticism has
qualities of its defects. A certain imaginative infection
from these dramas; they transport the mind into a domain
superiority that is somewhat unreal, but where it is not
ant to let one's self be persuaded that one actually p
life there has splendour and beauty; the suggestion of g
which radiates from it may very well be hollow: in its int
it is true, and while it is felt to be illusory, one yields to it
certain measure. A sincere romanticism is never entirely a
tion of words; the reader of these plays finds himself m
times, and moved in a manner that is inspiring. Lastly,
diction is almost always sonorous, often firm and nervous,
a dense, concentrated power which is evocative, just as m
it is expressive; it has even at times those sudden flash
poetry which, lighting up the drama, reveal such vast gl
at one stroke. This style is by no means pure; it still
along many a trace of bad taste—conceits, affected tricks
kinds. But it is the style of a great writer, who, if he has
yet mastered his best form, is already himself.

The brilliant success of these dramatic ventures, in wh
had no rival, despite the account to which his competitors t
some ephemeral stage triumphs, seems to have inspired D
with a feeling of confidence in his own powers, which at
got the better of the safety of his critical judgment. The
cation of *The Rival Ladies* to Lord Orrery (1664) not
justified the use of rhyme in tragedy, but even went to the
of recognising in it a useful and necessary check on the
ance of the poet's imagination

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dress—that is, by making him speak as if he were living and writing now. "I . . . resolved to alter the scene from Rome to London, and to make use of English names of men, places, and customs. . . ." Several satires of Horace and Juvenal are "imitated" in this manner, and the method is even applied to Boileau (*Eighth Satire, A Satire Touching Nobility*).

These efforts, though ingenious and interesting, are valuable less on their own account than for the way they opened, and in which Pope was to go farther. But it is by his four *Satires on the Jesuits* that Oldham should be judged; they form his most ambitious work, and the only one that is really substantial, for he died at the age of thirty, cutting short a career of promise. They present a compromise between the scholarly and the popular types, but nearer to the former. There is movement in them, a vigour of tone somewhat uncontrolled, a monotonous accumulation of effects that repeat but do not always reinforce one another; and, at the same time, a brilliance, a felicity in details, an energy of expression that can invent striking, unforgettable words; a rather heavy language, an often neglected verse. There is no humour to relieve the eloquence and irony of the execration; the shade of Loyola denounces the monstrous secrets of the Jesuits with a simplicity that is naïve to the extreme; however animated and coloured the pictures, they cannot lend any artistic value to invectives where the touch of Juvenal is everywhere apparent, and yet does not destroy the evident sincerity of the writer. A passionate nature, prone to brutality, with sensual impulses, a relish for honest purposes, a descriptive, concrete verve, Oldham attracts the reader and holds his interest more by virtue of the virile character of his personality, than by the actual merit of his poems.

If in these pieces, and in the rest of his satirical work, Oldham appeared original in the eyes of his contemporaries, it is because he aimed at general, impersonal criticisms, supported, it is true, by the crudest details, but bearing on the vices themselves, and sparing the individuals. Such qualities indeed infused satire with the real classical spirit, and raised it above the ordinary pamphlet and lampoon. Oldham has not been always faithful to this ideal, which others also preached, but which no one realised in his generation; yet he has always developed particular subjects into wider themes, which his slightly declamatory

oric knew very well how to use to advantage (*A satyr ressed to a Friend, that is about to leave the University; A yr upon a Woman, etc.*).

4. *The Satires of Dryden.*—Dryden was over fifty when he ote his great satires.[1] His genius now possessed all its gour, and he was the master of perfect poetic expression; life, the other hand, had matured his moral nature without embit- ering it; he had sufficient strength to dominate and govern his atred. Besides, the motives which prompted these poems are not of one single kind. Personal conviction, no doubt, counts for much among them; the crisis of the Popish Plot had given a definite turn to opinions and classified men; Dryden, following his tastes and the deliberate tendencies of his temperament, sought the side of the monarchy, just as he was soon to embrace a dogmatic faith. Suspicious of Shaftesbury and of the prin- ciples with which the popular cause identified itself, he is led to denounce the most dangerous partisans of this cause, the middle- class Whigs of the Town (*The Medal*). Against his former friend, Shadwell (*MacFlecknoe*), he had many grievances: a now manifest divergence of political opinions, the antipathy of an artistic nature as against a vulgar temperament, the legiti- mate resentment following a personal attack (*The Medal of John Bayes*, 1682). But at the same time, he does not forget that he is supporting the cause of the king, and that he writes with the connivance of the Court. A poet laureate should show both skill and self-command if he is engaged in strife during his tenure of office.

This is the explanation of the superiority of art in Dryden' satires. At times the violence of his tone is equal to that of h contemporaries; he has praised Oldham, in some fine lines, f having known, like himself, how to hate strongly (*To t Memory of Mr. Oldham*, 1683). He even confesses that could hardly trust the susceptibility of his own temperam (*Essay on Satire*). But his mastery of expression allowed in any case a scrupulous attention to form; and the fire of inspiration is tempered by the full and clear consciousnes the artist.

[1] *Absalom and Achitophel*: first part, 1681; the second part, 1682, is by Tate (see chap. ii. sect. 6; the portraits of Doeg and Og are by Dryden *Medal* and *MacFlecknoe*, 1682. Our knowledge as to the latter poem, etc., is under revision. See *Review of English Studies*, I, 187-190.

ous hue, stand the crew of the fomenters of revolt, domi-
d by the equivocal, mobile countenance of the evil counsellor.
energy of persuasion is still enhanced by the argumentation
the story, and by the speeches, in which everything with
nirable unity converges to the same end.

This art, of almost unexceptionable clearness, but robust
d coloured, and by no means timid, but reaching sureness
rough vigour, is chiefly concentrated in the portraits with
hich the work abounds. In these we admire the very fine
ense of delicate touch, the felicity of picturesque characterisa-
ion; above all, as Coleridge has said, the living truth of organic
wholes, which, within a general outline once drawn, gather sub-
stance through the addition of connected and psychologically
linked traits. Nowhere else do we find so free an example of
Dryden's classicism, enriched and set off as it is by a romanticism
of the imagination.

The style illustrates both. Here are all the qualities, for
the most part negative, with which the progress in literature
had identified itself for the last generation; a just accuracy, a
guarded fitness; the fever of intellectual imagination is now
appeased, and with it the "conceits" have disappeared. A kind
of virile instinct guides the inventive genius of the writer, direct-
ing it towards alliances of words and ideas in which brilliancy
and novelty harmonise with the demands of taste. But all the
central warmth, all the imaginative ardour subsists; it acts as an
animating force within the expression itself, imbuing it with
energy, vividness and vitality. Condensed in brief evocations,
in sober, striking images, the power of poetic suggestion is here
to be found in its fullness, in no way impeded by the exercise of
the writer's critical judgment. And one feels, in fact, that th
mind of the poet does not act in a double capacity; that h
critical faculty and his creative verve do not impair each othe
because they cannot be distinguished one from the other. T
style of Dryden, in his most decidedly classical pieces, is abo
all an inspired style; its purity and its firmness, just like
force and its lustre, are due to the unique felicity of a natur
which spontaneity had become synonymous with art

It has been rightly said, also, that Dryden's satirical
owes its outstanding quality to the fact that it represe
latter and more profoundly than in the case of Oldha

reconciliation between the scholarly ideal and popular inspiration. It remains popular because of its biblical setting, its imaginative theme, its direct allusions, and the portraits to which the reader could always attach a name. It is scholarly by virtue of its deportment, its relative moderation, the choice and the dignity of its expression, the generality of the thought, and that standard value, that impersonal significance, which Dryden has vested in the individual and at the same time representative figures of Zimri, Achitophel and Shimei.

Although a literary triumph, the poem had missed its immediate political end; it was hailed by a host of answers and parodies. The cause which it had served, however, carried the day a year later, and Shaftesbury had to seek refuge in Holland. Towards the end of 1682 there appeared a second part, published like the first anonymously, and in no way called for by the plan of the first. It is the work of a writer other than Dryden, but he had inserted therein two very fine passages, the portraits of Doeg and Og (Settle and Shadwell). Here the satire is no longer restrained by the desire for sober reserve which characterised the earlier poem, and a prodigious power of scornful realism gives itself vent.

In the interval were published *The Medal* and *MacFlecknoe*. The medal struck with the effigy of Shaftesbury after his acquittal becomes for Dryden the symbol of sedition. With an eloquence that now rings harsher and more direct, he denounces the hankering after republicanism which the bourgeoisie of the City still fostered, but would not admit; and this shapeless, many-membered body becomes a monster, a hydra of anarchy. Political reasoning now invests itself with the garb of impassioned imagination, and Dryden here shows the same genius for versified argumentation as in his religious poetry. Shadwell, the dramatist, and a Whig, is the hero of *MacFlecknoe*. The terrible fustigation to which he is subjected owes its origin to a disagreement in which there is an admixture of political motives, but of which the dominant reasons are of an individual order. Dryden therefore uses, and liberally, the right which he recognises in the satirist of attacking, not only the vice, but the vicious. This personal satire has all the characteristics of a comic, mock-heroic fantasy—the pompous crowning, by Flecknoe, a prince among poetasters, of an heir worthy of himself—which

upply Pope with more than one trait of his *Dunciad*. The
ding, a special gift with Dryden, of a crushing force of
kery with the sovereign good-humour of a merry giant,
ng enough to conquer without strain and bitterness, remains
particular feature of this poem.
in the copious outpouring of political satire at this moment
history, there is scarcely anything after Dryden that merits
amination. In order to fully appreciate the unique value of
s work, it is useful to compare it with one of the replies it
licited, for example, the *Absalom Senior, or Achitophel Trans-*
prosed, of Elkanah Settle (1682). One sees here how much
the conscientious use of biblical analogies was in the reach of
mediocre writers, and in what painstaking heaviness their labour
resulted. The poem displays some talent, and has forcible lines;
but an unbearable sense of boredom emanates from this pon-
derous narrative, overloaded with names, encumbered by too
many allusions, in which Dryden's ironical methods are turned
against himself with a docile obstinacy worthy of better success.

It will suffice to enumerate here, and in passing, the various
kinds of popular satire during the last twenty years of the seven-
teenth century, and to recall their close connection with the
political incidents of the day, the most important of which is
the revolution itself of 1688. These ephemeral writings, with
few exceptions, bear the traces, either in the substance or in
the form, derived for the most part from certain favourite
themes, such as the apologue of the masters of this literary kind
—Marvell, Oldham and Dryden. They are drawn from the
Bible, the dialogue, the portrait or "character," and the appari
tion of a ghost. Thus, from literary forms polished by th
talent of a Rochester (*The History of the Insipids*, 1676; *O*
the Young Statesmen, 1680), or animated by the vigour of
Marvell, one descends in quick transition towards the "litanie
and "ballads" recited and sung at the street corners, wh
owed their popularity to simple, taking measures, or to tu
that were in vogue. One of these refrains, "Lillibullero,"
nished almost the whole nation in 1688, when James II.
with one of those rallying signals that help public sentime
crystallise, and thanks to which decidedly mediocre lines m
immortalised.

5. *The Theory of Scholarly Satire: Influence of the An*

—The *Hudibras* of Butler is not a regular satire, but a mock-heroic poem, full of scornful irony. Marvell had paid scant attention to traditional forms, and had voluntarily brought his rough apologues within the range of the language and instincts of the people. Dryden, writing on behalf of the royal cause, or in order to avenge himself upon Shadwell, had allowed his verve to flow freely into the mould which the usual forms of contemporary imagination offered. Oldham, alone, in spite of his political intentions, had taken care to respect the classical models of satire. In his way he had re-established the tradition of Hall and Donne.

And yet, the models of antiquity had never enjoyed greater prestige, nor exercised more attraction. If their effective influence has not been more constant upon the masters of the style at this epoch, it is because political inspiration, intermingling irresistibly literature with life, was directing the writer towards free and new forms, more in keeping with public sentiment, which had to be solicited.

This does not mean to say that the forms of antiquity were less honoured. Dryden translated the Latin satirists. Heading a translation of Juvenal, in which he collaborated (1692), there is a long preface which plays the part, and has received the name, of an *Essay on Satire.* It centres round a comparison between Horace, Juvenal and Persius, the upshot of which is that Dryden, while feeling a greater esteem for the urbanity of Horace, and the helpfulness of his lessons, cannot but prefer Juvenal for the liveliness of his comic force and the vivacity of his style. However, in his *Absalom* he himself has rather preferred to follow the manner of Horace—as is shown in the character of Zimri. "How easy it is to call rogue and villain, and that wittily! But how hard to make a man appear a fool, a blockhead, or a knave, without using any of those opprobrious terms!" Led away by the logic of this preference, by the moralising dignity to which the seriousness of his subject usually raises the critic, and also, probably, by the Christian charity that had become very conscious within him, Dryden condemns the personal element in satire. Lampoons, such as are written so profusely, he says, are a dangerous weapon, and he himself of set purpose has disdained to reply when he was attacked. . . . Nevertheless, to retort remains a right, and in the public interest

ermitted "to make examples of vicious men." As for the of modern satire, they are simple: the subject should be the poet must put us on our guard against one single vice, extol one single virtue; the tone shall be lively and pleasant, due respect for good manners; the heroic line of ten ables, a more ample measure, shall be preferred to the short se of *Hudibras*. Finally, the perfect model of this art can be nd in the *Lutrin* of Boileau.

This interesting essay, in which the temperament of Dryden somewhat lost to view under a conventional dignity, lays own the laws of satire in its literary purity, such as the mind f a humanist was able to conceive it. Thus defined, satire omes dangerously near a sermon, and tends to become a purely artificial form. So strong is the authority of the classical ideal, derived from the Ancients, that Dryden does not dare to recognise and hail the very life of satirical inspiration where it is to be found: in the works of a Butler, a Marvell, or in his own writings. . . . He only places his *Absalom*, modestly, in the line of Varro. The artificial kind which he recommends will only be saved from mere imitation by the systematic use of anachronism, by frank and strictly modernised adaptations of ancient themes. This will be Pope's method, and already Rochester and Oldham have essayed it. But Dryden thinks that he ought to repress the guilty inclination which carries the modern reader towards parody; if in his Juvenal this "fault which is never committed without some pleasure," has not always been avoided, it is a licence wherein he excuses himself, and which he reproves in principle. . . . In fact, he does not take very great pains to avoid it.

His critical judgment, therefore, appears here to be some what timid; his creative instinct was not hampered by all thes rules. These, meanwhile, were showing their sterility amor his contemporaries. The "regular" satires of this age are f from equalling, either in number or in value, the free expressio of the satirical spirit; and almost all of them relieve their co monplaces with personal allusions. Oldham is the only nota exception. Another writer, if we believe Dryden, would h equalled or even surpassed the Ancients: Charles Sackville, I Buckhurst and Earl of Dorset,[1] to whom the translatio

[1] See above, chap. ii, sect. 6.

Juvenal is dedicated. But this is one of those extravagant statements to which even a Dryden was led by forced adulation. The *Epistle to Mr. Edward Howard* and the *Satire on a Lady of Ireland* are witty, biting poems, not free from harshness or indelicacy, quick in movement, pleasing in form, but devoid of any serious originality. Their scope, besides, is exclusively individual.

The *Essay on Satire* by John Sheffield, Duke of Buckinghamshire,[1] unwittingly confirms the conclusions suggested by that of Dryden. He also, bowing to the authority of a moral propriety which classicism turned into a law, explains the high ideal of an impersonal satire, and interweaves with his reflections the most plainly wounding allusions to persons. . . .

Much rather than to Buckhurst, Dryden's praise might have been given to Rochester; a man to whom, it is true, he too justly could bear a grudge. In the *Satire against Mankind,*[2] in the *Allusion to the Tenth Satire of the First Book of Horace,* the criticism of moral or literary values is raised to a height of true impersonality by a writer of vigorous thought and penetrating judgment, without the least touch of abstract banality; and if the jeering of Rochester is elsewhere of the most galling harshness, it possesses a natural quality of form, an elegant distinction, that lend it a lasting artistic worth.[3]

6. *The Diffusion of the Satirical Spirit.*—In order to complete the study of the various expressions of the satirical spirit, the stage also would have to be taken into account. The Restoration theatre is, in a sense, and in its most brilliant aspects, one great satire; and it is not only comedy which supports this statement: Otway in the tragedy of *Venice Preserved* portrays Shaftesbury under the repelling and recognisable traits of Senator Antonio. Throughout the whole of this theatre, the prologues and epilogues are constantly made the occasion for allusions and mockery.

Thus quick with life and spreading everywhere, the spirit of satire will be bequeathed by the Restoration to the classical age.[4]

[1] See idem. [2] See idem.

[3] The poem of Thomas Otway, *A Satire against Libels,* 1680, offers a curious example of the intellectual reprobation which the violent tone of the popular pamphlets aroused among the cultivated minds of the time.

[4] The intrepid nature of Restoration satire had found, at least in theory, a limit in the Licensing Act, by virtue of which the monarchy had wanted to suppress certain publications animated by a spirit of open hostility against the Crown or the

it will be at the root of all the work of Pope and Swift; it will inspire the gentle efforts of the *Spectator* to correct the manners of the day. Even as it realises itself more fully, the literature of reason will more and more become a literature of criticism. In this way will actually be reached the true and loftiest aims of satire; but without the critical spirit, that subtle and all-pervading leaven, concentrating itself within the narrow bounds of any one kind. In vain will talented writers, such as Young, make supreme attempts to revive in England the general, reasoning, and solemn type of satire, the eloquent denunciation of vice, the persuasive exaltation of virtue, according to the recipes and formulæ of the theorists.

¹ To be consulted: *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol vii., chap. vii.; vol viii, chaps. ii iii viii ; G Murphy, *A Bibliography of English Character-books, 1608-1700*, 1925, idem, *A Cabinet of Characters*, 1926, Previté-Orton, *Political Satire in English Poetry*, 1910, H. Walker, *English Satire and Satirists*, 1925; see studies on Butler, Marvell, Dryden, Oldham, etc.

persons in authority The best known among the censors under Charles II., Roge L'Estrange (1616-1704)) was himself a pamphleteer and took part in the quarre of his time. The Licensing Act, suspended in 1679 and re-established in 16 expired finally in 1695, without ever having constituted a very effective barr against the freedom of the press.

CHAPTER IV

THE THEATRE

1. *Limits of the First Period.*—The greatest literary activity during the Restoration is to be found in the sphere of the theatre, and the authors of comedy form, perhaps, the most brilliant group of writers in their epoch, and one which best illustrates its moral features. On the other hand, they outshine their immediate successors. Therefore histories of literature will take Restoration dramatists as a centre for the study of the English theatre at the end of the seventeenth and at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the classical age being, so to speak, in this domain, a weaker continuation of that which precedes it.

If one looks at the subject from the point of view of the evolution of kinds, there may be some advantage in not separating the successive phases of a movement which extends over some fifty years, and which, taken altogether, forms a natural whole. Comedy in particular—that of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh and Farquhar—would appear to represent an unbroken series of connected works. But if the history of literature is brought into close contact with that of thought, and looked upon as an aspect of the total development of a society, this linked succession must be broken up, leaving room for a division that is more logical, and historically better founded. In reality, a generation separates Wycherley from Congreve.

The break, in the interval, is marked by the Revolution of 1688, with the moral changes which accompany it. In every respect English literature between 1688 and 1702 forms a period of transition; both in inspiration and in style, it then bears the stamp of a special character; and each literary kind reveals the influence of a spirit akin, no doubt, to that of the Restoration itself, but still different from it. In order to understand this period, it will be useful to view it as a whole.

The dates 1660 and 1688 therefore, for the time being, t the field of this survey. No doubt the dramatic career of yden is not wholly contained within those years; but the five ys with which this career ends, between 1690 and 1694, may connected quite naturally with the twenty-three which have eceded them. The works of Dryden, Etherege, Wycherley, ee, Otway, together with those of their immediate con-mporaries, constitute properly speaking the theatre of the estoration.

2. *The Beginning: D'Avenant. Foreign Influences and National Tradition.*—The Puritan Revolution had closed the playhouses in 1642; for fourteen years, no regular performance was given, save in private, or under the menace of the law. In fact, the life of the theatre was suspended. The silence of the stage most certainly was impatiently borne by many; but the supporters of an austere code of morals had thus satisfied an ancient grudge, and the severity they displayed in their control of manners made any protest futile in advance. In 1656, the secret lassitude of all wills was growing patent enough, or the rule—however glorious—of the Protectorate was tending plainly enough to a political and social relaxation, for a skilful man to turn the obstacle which no one dared attack openly. Sir William d'Avenant,[1] the author of plays staged before the Civil War, Poet Laureate under Charles I., closely associated with the royal cause, obtained permission to open to the public an "allegorical entertainment by declamation and music, after the manner of the Ancients" (*The First Day's Entertainment at Rutland House*). This first and discreet attempt—rather hazardous, however, if one stops to ponder over certain remarks of Aristophanes, the advocate of theatrical art—was followed the same year by a more ambitious show, *The Siege of Rhodes*.

One of the main influences that are preparing a new phase in dramatic art is here clearly apparent. D'Avenant had resided in France; he had come into contact there with an artistic and literary atmosphere rich in germs: that of the restless but fertile period when classicism was flowering into full bloom. To England he brought back many confused ideas and preferences, the product of which is a hybrid work, of still uncertain character. In *The Siege of Rhodes* are to be found suggestions furnished b

[1] 1606-68; *Dramatic Works*, ed. by Maidment and Logan, 1872-4

Corneille, with his conception of love and of noble sentiments; next, the rather similar inspiration of the romances of Gomberville, La Calprenède and the Scudérys, which were already popular in England; lastly, a taste for the opera, which was being implanted in France with the Italian plays of Mazarin's day, and with the *Andromède* of Corneille (1650). And mingling with these elements, we find memories of the national theatre, under the form in which it was kept alive, about 1640, by the degenerate disciples of Fletcher.

The first part of *The Siege of Rhodes* is divided into "entries," like the ballets of Benserade, which were the rage at the court of the young Louis XIV. It is written in rhymed verse, in a very free and variable measure, adapted, as the author tells us, to the demands of the recitative, then a novelty in England. As for the subject, it is "heroic," and destined to recommend virtue "under the forms of valour and conjugal love." A naïve sincere ardour, in which one feels a youthfulness of spirit, despite its consciousness of self, animates this romantic work, clumsy in places, but at times raised by the lyricism of honour and passion. It can be regarded as the germ both of English opera and of heroic tragedy. While the scenic displays, the wealth of accessories, the striving after great picturesque effects, the "machines" (on a narrow stage the town of Rhodes, the port, the fleet, and the camp of the Turks, had to be presented either together or successively) were not unknown to English dramatic art before 1656, it is none the less true that through its material figuration also the play caused a sensation, and marks a date. Lastly, if it is not a fact that an actress appeared in it for the first time in England, it is certain that an English actress played one of the leading parts, and that this daring and almost unprecedented step became a common feature of the Restoration theatre.

Before 1660, d'Avenant wrote two other plays of the same kind, and tried, by selecting national themes, to prevent the possible revival of Puritan susceptibility. When the king's return brought with it the liberty of the theatre, he with Thomas Killigrew was given charge of one of the troupes of actors, and one of the two playhouses, which were authorised by letters patent.

In order to understand the development of dramatic art under the Restoration, one must imagine these two "companies," that of the king and that of his brother the Duke of York, gath-

g together talented actors, such as Betterton, and actresses, n as Nell Gwyn, whose charm just as much as their stage gifts de them the idols of the public. Greedily attracted to long-bidden pleasures, elegant society crowded to the plays, which ry often were honoured by the favour and the presence of the ng; the theatre now became, for the young noblemen, both a ashionable amusement, and a daily occasion for meetings and ntrigues. The brilliant house, frequented even by the wealthy and cultured part of the middle class, and where Pepys, a citizen of London, liked to rub shoulders with the upper world, and to catch a glimpse of the king's favourites, is one of the main social centres of this age, just as it is morally its most complete symbol. The passion for an art, rendered the more pleasing because it has in it the value of a protest, expresses a political preference, triumphs over despised enemies, and gains its freedom at the expense of a conquered austerity; the attraction of unbridled modes of living which actors and spectators encouraged one another to exemplify, and to applaud; the atmosphere of gallantry which reigns in the theatre—all these influences explain the cynicism, and the success, of a literature that is singularly free, crude in its boldness, insolent in its self-assertion, and seeming always to pursue, over and above the direct expression of itself, the confusion of an abolished régime of ideas and sentiments that had long been tyrannical.

By this moral reaction, this psychological release, the Res toration theatre is an outcome of the movement itself of nationa life; it is an aspect of the new age. But in the dramatic for with which it invests the common spirit of the time, it shows itse wholly impregnated with foreign influences. No other litera kind reveals to the same degree the range and the variety of t suggestions which, coming from the Continent, are spreading this moment over intellectual England.

It is with France that these contacts are most numerous easily established. Exiles like d'Avenant, Waller and Den bring back with them a taste which has been made more pr and strengthened along its own spontaneous lines; in add models, images and rhythms. The king and the court h more superficial but just as decided instinct for the same r noble, correct art, for the same elegant and luxurious exi an all-powerful and universal magnetism makes the Pa

Versailles of Louis XIV. the centre whence politeness and ...re radiate, and towards which the desire for a more perfect ...isation converges from every side. Classical tragedy in ...nce shines with a bright effulgence; translations have already ...ealed Corneille to English readers, and soon the tragi-come-...es of Thomas Corneille, the heroic tragedies of Scudéry or ...uinault, the comedies of Molière, and even, though later and ...ith less keenness, the purely French art of Racine, are all ...agerly welcomed and imitated. Their prestige is strengthened ...y that of kindred or similar forms, such as the romance, the opera, and the ballet. If the influence of France on the dramatic literature of the Restoration has been exaggerated, or expressed in too simple terms, it is because other influences, and notably that of national tradition, have been sometimes neglected, or examined too cursorily. But the precise examples, the definite traces of imitations and borrowings, are so numerous; so strong is the general sense of a diffused suggestion, of an analogy of atmosphere, which the relative parallelism of the contemporary developments of the two peoples does not sufficiently account for, that one cannot hesitate in locating at this point one of the most certain international transfers of influence in European literature. With d'Avenant and *The Siege of Rhodes*, there opens a phase in the history of English drama characterised by the ascendency of the French model; and this phase, despite some interruptions, was to last for a whole century.

In borrowing from Corneille something of his romantic pride and of his rhetoric of feeling—while not the serious and De...cartes-like doctrine underlying all his drama, his theory of wi... his notion of love founded in esteem and reason—it is a lit... of the spirit of Spain that d'Avenant found in the French writ... and Spanish influence, whether direct, or derived through ... literature and genius of France, is an element of the orig... character of the Restoration theatre. This influence, li... recognisable vein, had run through the English drama sinc... time of the Renascence; but it remained superficial, and gen... speaking, influenced scarcely anything save the plot or the ex... delineation of the characters, not the deeper substance ... works. After 1660, the tastes of the court and of th... tend to favour plays which are full of movement, in the... of those shows where the "comedia de capa y espada"

ed in Spain; and a definite Spanish origin can be assigned
ys such as Sir Samuel Tuke's *Adventures of Five Hours*,
eorge Digby's *Elvira*. Elsewhere, the derivation is only
al, and limited to some episodes, as in Wycherley's *Gentle-Dancing-Master*; but it is most often indirect, and still
nts to the popularity of the French model.

Leaving out France, it is in national tradition that one must
ok for the true sources of the new English theatre, and indeed
r the main sources. Restoration drama and comedy are the
utcome of a state of manners and of a state of mind; and these
manners just as this mind, however strong may be the stamp of
oreign influence, are the issue of an inner original rhythm of
the English genius. It seems preferable to say only that this
rhythm calls for and permits, after 1660, a diffuse and some-
times deep action of the literary or social impulses that come
from France; and therefore, that the affinities which are thus
revealed ought to enter into the very definition of this phase,
and be reckoned among its characteristics.

For the theatre in particular, it is possible to retrace the
stages of the development which leads from the last years of the
Renascence to the Restoration. Before the banning of plays,
the life of drama, weakened by an inward exhaustion, had
already sought refuge in the complication of the incidents or the
plot itself. The outcome of Beaumont and Fletcher's art was
tragi-comedy. At the same time, a kind of romantic infection,
a fashion of adventure, of high-sounding and complacent
ieroism, had spread all over Western Europe. The spirit ani-
mating the French Fronde, the romances of chivalry, the epi
poems, the plays of Hardy, Rotrou and the young Corneille, i
like a sort of second youth, proud and somewhat quarrelsom
on the eve of classical maturity and balance. Already the sig
of this spirit had appeared before 1640 at the court of Charl
I.; it comes with the exiled Cavaliers to the Continent, in
large a measure as they receive it there; even those who rem
in England feel it rise from the irresistible suggestions of t
age, despite the austere sobriety of a Puritan régime.
Charles II., on his accession to the throne, instals it in fav
among the courtiers, the court ladies, the men of fashion
poets and authors, a chivalrous gallantry, the love of
exploits, a language strewn with hyperboles, a lofty tone,

rather hollow pretension to heroism as to tender love, in their contrast to the deep cynicism of this age form an organic group of moral traits, and an essential part of the physiognomy of the time. The reason is that England, like France, then lives through a period of disturbed intellectual exuberance, when the romanticism of intellect, of style and imagination replaces that of feelings, which is becoming exhausted, and that of will, which is condemned by the century in its progress towards reason and order. During this transition which goes from Fletcher to Dryden, the daring refinements of the "metaphysical" poets, and the lyricism of the Cavalier poets, well show in what direction the inner trend of contemporary thought is setting.

Thus, heroic tragedy itself is not exclusively the result, in England, of French examples; it has its true roots in the evolution of the national mind. D'Avenant, before the triumph of the Puritan Parliament, and before his stay in France, had written masques for Charles I., and the English masque may be regarded as one of the origins of the opera. He had written dramas in which the exalted inspiration of honour and love made itself felt (*Love and Honour*, 1642, etc.); he puts them on the stage again after the Restoration, and their tone chimes with that of the new theatre. The first plays of Killigrew (*The Prisoners, The Princess*, etc.), performed before the ban upon the theatre, appear as stages in the same transition.

The courtiers of Charles II., besides, do not only look with favour upon the plays written to flatter their preferences; but extend a welcome to the repertory of the English Renascence. No doubt, it is partly through necessity that, from 1660 onwards, Fletcher and his predecessors are again taken up: was not theirs a fund which could be drawn upon, while waiting for the poets to bestir themselves? On the other hand, it is only too certain that the taste of the epoch judges and classifies the masterpieces of the great dramatists from a strange angle of vision. Beaumont and Fletcher are favourites with the public; Ben Jonson, the particular idol of scholars, and praised on every occasion by the critics, follows them very closely. Shakespeare, whose greatness is only felt by a few, pleases the crowd by the secondary aspects of his genius; he is disconcerting to an average though educated mind, such as that of Pepys, more often than

a delight.[1] The limits of incomprehension seem to be
ed when theatrical managers and authors rival one another
lorning *Macbeth* with ballets, or transforming *The Tempest*
an opera. Dryden himself quietly shared in these profana-
s. The successes won by the Elizabethan drama under the
storation seem due, very often, to the superficial resemblance
its romanticism with the cheaper fanciful instincts of the time;
the appetite of a public eager for sensations, rather than to a
ncere understanding of its inherent qualities. But when all is
aid, this drama was there, revived again and again, recalling
tself to eye and ear alike; the soundest sensibilities were able
o feel its incomparable radiance; and the continuity of a national
art forced itself upon all as a living tradition. By the very fact
of its assertion, it became, in large measure, a reality.

3. *Heroic Tragedy: Dryden, etc*—The main substance of heroic tragedy is contained in the work of Dryden. If he is not the creator of it, he raises it higher than anyone else, and leaves it at the moment when, after a very brilliant vogue, it has ceased to please.

It is difficult to exactly determine the origin of this dramatic kind; many threads go to compose its texture, and many hands have woven it. In one sense, it represents the completion of a long development, and unites the most diverse influences—those that have just been enumerated. On the other hand, the writer who best knew how to manage this form—Dryden—attributes its most direct parentage to Sir William d'Avenant, in *The Siege of Rhodes*.[2] But d'Avenant, he says, has not had the ability or the courage as yet to pursue his effort to its end; he has not given his play all the wealth of incidents, the boldness of plot the variety of personages, which an heroic poem permits an demands; now, heroic tragedy is nothing else than a poem whic has been made manifest to the eye. Love and valour will the fore be its mainsprings, just as with Ariosto; the sentiments, a the style, will freely attain to a grandeur quite beyond actual mediocrity of human life. And the measure of the will be the rhymed couplet, which has won a place for itsel

[1] *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is "the most insipid, ridiculous play that saw in my life" (29th Sept., 1662). *Othello* was only "a mean thing" af *Adventures of Five Hours*, by Tuke (20th Aug., 1666).—For Pepys and his see below, chap. v.

[2] Essay on Heroic Plays, preface to *The Conquest of Granada*, 1672.

the stage, and will henceforth rule over tragedy. It has been said that rhyme is unnatural, and distant from actual conversation: it is therefore all the more fitting, in order to raise actions and images alike above the banality of everyday existence. No doubt it has its difficulties; but no one is forced to express himself in rhyme; and such as have been refused this gift will be wise if they abstain from attempting its beauties or incurring its risks.

The Siege of Rhodes, revised, increased by a second part, and staged magnificently in 1662, better merits in its more developed form the historic honour which Dryden assigns to it. But other authors can advance their claims; for example, Roger Boyle, Count of Orrery, whose *Henry V.*, *Mustapha* and *Black Prince,* written in rhymed couplets, were played at uncertain dates between 1662 and 1667; and Sir Robert Howard, Dryden's own brother-in-law, with whom he collaborated in 1664 in a play which some regard as the first really complete heroic drama (*The Indian Queen*). Already in 1664 Dryden himself had produced an example, though not of the same kind, yet of the most closely related, tragi-comedy, in *The Rival Ladies.* He was to come back to this on several occasions in the course of his career, and even down to his last years (*The Maiden Queen,* 1667; *The Spanish Friar,* 1681; *Love Triumphant,* 1694); but for a time, it is upon heroic tragedy, properly so called, that his effort is almost exclusively concentrated; and in this we find his most brilliant work: *The Indian Empress,* 1667; *Almanzor and Almahide, or The Conquest of Granada,* in two parts, 1669 and 1670; *Aureng-Zebe,* 1675.

It is easy enough to judge these dramas, provided one examines them in themselves, and avoids comparing them with the very different ideal of French classical tragedy. They are, first and foremost, romantic; in this sense, they would approximate to the English theatre of the Renascence; but their romanticism is impoverished by the exclusive preoccupation of producing a single kind of effect, just as it is not without being shackled, for all that, by the new attention to rules.[1] If one had to look for analogies in Elizabeth's time, they would be found in the *Tamburlaine* of Marlowe, rather than anywhere else. The aim of these plays is to give to sensibility, imagination and the senses

[1] In the preface to his *Maiden Queen,* Dryden presents the play as regular according to the strictest laws of drama.

impressions of a surprising and superhuman grandeur. ...ance, Corneille also, it is true, had based tragedy upon ...ration; but he had put all the intellectual quality of his ...artes-like thought into the emotion of a soul overwhelmed ...he beauty of noble sacrifices; esteem, with him, was the fruit ...a reason sublimated into moral passion, and in this way it ...nd up the desires of the heart with the decisions of conscience. ...d if the hero merited our entire sympathy, it was because his ...bleness was a conquest, the reward of a cruel struggle against ...mself. All this subtlety and, it must be said, this idealism, are ...osent from Dryden's notion of heroism; this, no doubt, does not ...esolve itself completely into mere physical courage and great ...strokes of the sword; but its spiritual value seems to depend chiefly upon the lack of any struggle, and upon a victory immediately won over nature and over the flesh.

Such a shifting of the centre of gravity gives back predominance to imagination and sensibility; and even with an Aureng-Zebe, the most inward of Dryden's heroes, the one in whom virtue is endued with the most distinctly psychological quality, one can say that generosity is the inborn and purely impulsive gift of temperament. It is not certain but that this view may be after all the truest and the deepest; but here it has scarcely any philosophic value, as it is not the outcome of any deliberate choice; and above all, it has hardly any dramatic worth; its repeated affirmation, at moments of supreme crisis, rouses our admiring wonder, rather than it touches us with a heartfelt admiration.

Other consequences are of a still more serious nature. If heroism has its way without a struggle, it is always equal to itself; with the result that there is a fatal resemblance betwee... the heroes. This dramatic kind was so soon exhausted, becaus... it is afflicted with an unconquerable monotony. Excluded fro... the core of the work, as from the characters, the element ... variety seeks refuge in the incidents; the plot, and the mater... devices—exoticism, staging, machines, etc., assume the imp... tance which the superficial forms of romantic drama have alw... given them. Finally, the style has to suffice for effects of in... sity, which the purely moral force of conflicting sentiments ... not any longer supply; so that nobleness tends towards bom... and vigour towards frenzy. This inner degeneration of ...

grandeur, on the stage, is so constant, and such a commonplace, that it is unnecessary to dwell upon it. Nothing is easier than to underline the defects of Dryden's heroic tragedies. Let it suffice to say that they are great, and such as one would expect.

But their outer and, as it were, surface romanticism has the qualities of its defects. A certain imaginative infection emanates from these dramas; they transport the mind into a domain of superiority that is somewhat unreal, but where it is not unpleasant to let one's self be persuaded that one actually penetrates; life there has splendour and beauty; the suggestion of generosity which radiates from it may very well be hollow: in its intention it is true, and while it is felt to be illusory, one yields to it in a certain measure. A sincere romanticism is never entirely a question of words; the reader of these plays finds himself moved at times, and moved in a manner that is inspiring. Lastly, the diction is almost always sonorous, often firm and nervous, with a dense, concentrated power which is evocative, just as much as it is expressive; it has even at times those sudden flashes of poetry which, lighting up the drama, reveal such vast glimpses at one stroke. This style is by no means pure; it still drags along many a trace of bad taste—conceits, affected tricks of all kinds. But it is the style of a great writer, who, if he has not yet mastered his best form, is already himself.

The brilliant success of these dramatic ventures, in which he had no rival, despite the account to which his competitors turned some ephemeral stage triumphs, seems to have inspired Dryden with a feeling of confidence in his own powers, which at times got the better of the safety of his critical judgment. The dedication of *The Rival Ladies* to Lord Orrery (1664) not only justified the use of rhyme in tragedy, but even went to the length of recognising in it a useful and necessary check on the exuberance of the poet's imagination.

No doubt, the celebrated *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), in dialogue form, of never-flagging interest, brings to the discussion of the problems of drama the breadth of view which Corneille had exemplified in his *Examens* and *Discours*. Here Dryden shows the most original and permanent groundwork of his thought; that realistic understanding of the special qualities and claims of the English national art, in which his incertitudes were finally to find rest. He explains here very skilfully the diverse

s of the truth; the advantages of the Ancients, and those e Moderns; the foundation of the unities and of the rules ture, and the eminent virtues of the French theatre. While orrows something from all those theses, including the last, ays a warm tribute to Shakespeare, Fletcher and Jonson, and ises them, not only for their substantial accord with the rules, also for the free genius which has permitted them to find ese in themselves. Nor is his justification of rhyme in any way ogmatic; it was not necessary, he says, to our fathers, if we refer it to-day; and its relative constraint answers to the self-uling emotion of a more conscious art; the rhythmic scheme, besides, must be free, varied by enjambments and half-lines.

But the epilogue to the second part of *The Conquest of Granada* flatters the public at the expense of the just claims of the past: a more polished age knows merits which were unknown to a rude epoch, and to a yet unrefined language; a Dryden is a better poet than a Jonson, since his audience demands more from him. . . . These remarks having called forth some epigrams, Dryden repeated his argument in the *Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age* (1672), in which the superior merits of the present are established by means of a too facile enumeration of the faults which spoil, for example, the "vulgar" diction of *Measure for Measure* or *The Winter's Tale*. . . . Thus, at the summit of his dramatic career, and championing a form of art which, he affirms, is "the most pleasing that the Ancients or the Moderns have known," Dryden does not rise above the common thought of his time.

Such a success, however, had in it something artificial. Th taste for the "heroic" is still very strong at the beginning of th Restoration; but it is contradicted by the cynicism and the critic spirit of a rational age; while the first tendency, here rath superficial, is a survival of the past, the second is in deep ha mony with political and moral realities, and has the future its side. Great sentiments and paraded virtues form a stra accompaniment to the mockery of *Hudibras*. The frivol sceptical public which relished Butler, without always un standing him, and which applauded the light comedy of Restoration, could not raise itself for long, even were it thr a complacent imagination, to the sublimity of Almanzor *quest of Granada*). Early enough, the dry irony of the

revolted against a dramatic kind which, stuck-up in an attitude of affected pretentiousness, offered itself broadly and freely as a butt for ridicule. Soon after 1660 George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham,[1] formed the project of writing a satirical play in which the bragging note of the new drama would be scoffed at; he had collaborators, among whom, it is said but without any solid proof, was Butler himself. D'Avenant or Sir Robert Howard was, at first, to be parodied; but the repeated triumphs of Dryden pointed him out as a fitter object for attack, and it is he especially, under the name of John Bayes,[2] whom *The Rehearsal* (1671) assails.

The hero, Drawcansir, is a replica of Almanzor; very obvious allusions are aimed at the personages, situations, and themes of Dryden's theatre, or of other writers. A work of rather mediocre fancy, devoid of any moral bearing or deep artistic motives, the play is often witty and amusing; some hits have the direct accuracy which results from a sharp perception of exaggerations or incongruities; and the harmony of the thesis with a certain average good sense lends it a force that it does not owe fully to its merit. Hateful and ridiculous, the portrait of Bayes is too scathing to harm Dryden, who was wise enough not to see himself in it. But despite its scurrility, the comic vein in *The Rehearsal* sprang from the very nature of things, and served its purpose.

It did not kill heroic drama. For ten years, said Buckingham, we have listened to rhyme, and not to reason: "Pray let this prove a year of prose and sense." The wish was perhaps granted; but after an interval in which he had taken up in prose the defence of his Almanzor, Dryden wrote *Aureng-Zebe*. This play, it is true, already marks a transition towards another ideal. In it the tragic element is purer, and one has even been able to discover a distant influence of the sober art of Racine. Despite its numerous shortcomings, the style has often a classical restraint; the versification shows more freedom, and blank verse even reappears in places. The character of Aureng-Zebe, with the nobleness and the gentleness of a knight without reproach, is almost a fine thing. On the other hand, the comic elements are developing, less, it seems, in the direction of tragi-comedy,

[1] 1628-1687.
[2] This name signifies "laurels"; Dryden was Poet Laureate from 1670.

n towards the unconsciously imitated model of Shakespearean ma; the happy ending decidedly takes us away from heroic gedy. Finally, in the prologue, Dryden says that he is tired rhyme, confesses that he is full of shame "at Shakespeare's cred name," and marks his own place between two periods of oetry, "the first of this, and hindmost of the last." The return o the deeper inspirations of national temperament could not be nore clearly indicated.

The decisive proof was not long in coming (*All for Love*, 1678). But in a dramatic species akin to that which he abandoned from now onwards, Dryden was still going to produce an interesting work. His career, moreover, follows a sinuous line, full of such turns. *The Spanish Friar* (1681) has all the characteristics of tragi-comedy; two plots are combined in it, one principal and tragic, the other comic and secondary (this latter, in fact, being here the better part of the play, as it is the more developed); and Dryden justifies this mixture in principle (Dedication of the work) by arguments in which is expressed the innate preference of English genius for the mixed forms of dramatic art. Besides, he upbraids the turgidness of a style that is falsely heroic, and makes no exception in the case of his own *Conquest of Granada*. Lastly, the piece is written in blank verse and in prose. Thus the evolution of his taste is leading him to greater sobriety, as to a deliberate independence of "rules." In spite of the momentary variations of his thought, chiefly in th expression which he gives it, has henceforth found a fixed centr to revolve upon.

Heroic tragedy, meanwhile, was reaching the final stage decay, dying from an inner exhaustion which Buckingham's sat does not seem to have much hastened. *The Empress Morocco* by Settle (1673) had been very successful; *Destruction of Jerusalem* by Crowne (1677) did not reaw the languishing interest of the public. While the influenc the heroic kind is still to be felt in Otway and in Lee, it is them permeated by a very different spirit, which leads us towards older and deeper elements of English dramatic tion.

4. *Comedy: Etherege, Wycherley, Shadwell, etc.*—R tion comedy came into being just as early as heroic tra no less a natural issue of the general influences of t

and it was still better able to satisfy contemporary tastes. The spirit of comedy is essentially a social thing; it develops through the reciprocal observation of characters, the refining of the critical sense, the fixing of conventional values. A court, a society that prided themselves upon their intellectual elegance, would make mockery fashionable: does it not call forth all the vivacity of wit, the gift of joking, the art of neat speech? All the circumstances which favoured satire, also favoured the satirical notation of manners; and the stage offered the easiest as well as the most pleasing field for the collective exercise of ridicule. So that from 1660 onwards there is a revival of Ben Jonson's "humours," as much as of Fletcher's dramas. After several tentative efforts, Etherege and Wycherley create, in different but analogous moulds, the new type of comedy.

Before them, some attempts had been made, where most often is still felt the paramount influence of Ben Jonson, but where other traits are discernible, called into being by the new circumstances.

During the first years which followed the Restoration, one satirical theme dominates all others: the raillery aimed at the fallen Puritan régime. Such was the trend of the deep reaction of the national spirit; and the playwrights, who had been silenced by their adversaries, were even less inclined than others to pardon them. Therefore, a whole group of plays, with or without the accompaniment of orthodox Royalist sentiments, give vent to a scornful condemnation of religious and moral hypocrisy.[1] Among them is to be noted the work which reveals the vigorous talent of John Wilson (*The Cheats*, 1662). Here is a full-flavoured, realistic commentary on the great Puritanic fraud, which makes one think of Butler. As in *Hudibras*, the pious pretence of the preacher, Scruple, is bound up with other vices or other lies which group themselves naturally round it: the usury and sneaking corruption of Alderman Whitebroth, the charlatanry of the astrologer-doctor, Mopus; and the casuistry, implicit or open, which had been the outcome of the great effort of the "saints" to build up life on the repression of instinct, is denounced by the very arguments of Pascal.[2]

[1] For example: *The Rump, or the Mirror of the Late Times*, by John Tatham, 1660; *The Committee*, by Sir Robert Howard, 1665, etc.

[2] The *Provinciales* had been translated into English as early as 1657 and 1658. From the same J. Wilson, in 1665, we have a comedy, *The Projectors*, which is

Dryden, meanwhile, turns first of all his versatile talent to edy (*The Wild Gallant*, 1663); the play is mediocre, and s first dramatic attempt does not even hold much promise for e future. This was not the field in which he was to win his iumphs; but one may not take him at his word when, in his itical treatises, he declares that he is incapable of achieving any uccess in it (*A Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, 1668); he comic scenes of *The Spanish Friar* show that he knew how to imbue such work with racy verve and a quality of genuine invention.[1] However the case may be, in the intervals of drama-writing, Dryden managed to pen several comedies. Here he displays an even more marked freedom of tone than in his tragedies; the more noticeable, as he claims not to use the gross methods of farce; and as his dialogue sometimes, for instance in *Marriage-à-la-Mode*, has brilliance and drollery.

Immediately after Dryden's earliest attempts, the first play of Sir George Etherege[2] was staged; and a truly new note was struck this time. Restoration society, with its cynical, frivolous elegance, bore in itself the suggestion and at least confused ideal of a light and witty art, where comedy, freed from all moralising realism as from all doctrinal intention, was no longer anything else than the mocking image of a care-free life. To catch these manners in their actual colouring, to attribute to them only the character that is essentially theirs, and to diversify their immortality with the lively variations of fancy, was at the same tim to give a picture of them, to extract their philosophy, and satirise them in the only way that was fit. In order to have t intuitive sense of this attitude, and of the resources it offered art, a poet must possess a personal experience and the love fashionable life, the keen perception of finer shades, the gif

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strangely analogous to the *Avare* of Molière (1668), a coincidence that can explained by the common imitation of Plautus. The problem requires investi

[1] *Sir Martin Mar-All*, adapted from the *Etourdi* of Molière, *The Assig* 1672; *Marriage-à-la-mode*, 1672, *Limberham*, 1678, *Amphitryon*, imitated Plautus and Molière, 1690.

[2] Born about 1634, he resided for a considerable time in France, wro comedies: *The Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub*, 1664, *She Would if Sh* 1668; *The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter*, 1676, and some light ve as diplomatic agent to Ratisbon, he exchanged with his friends, amo Dryden, an amusing correspondence, and died in Paris, it is believed, *Works*, ed. by Verity, 1888; *Dramatic Works*, ed by Brett-Smith, 192 Dobrée, *Essays in Biography, 1680-1726*, 1925

expression. Etherege has all the sprightly ease, and intimate knowledge of the elegant world, called for in this type of the comedy of manners. A born writer, he sojourns in France, where he steadies and still further sharpens his faculty for irony and epigram.

Is it possible that he there became acquainted with the work of Molière, and owed something to his influence? Such has not been proved. But in the vivacity of turn, the easy dialogue, a certain sober precision, his work bears the very evident mark of French influence. The originality of Etherege comes, above all, from his temperament; still, his temperament could but be encouraged, developed in a literary atmosphere with which it offered such complete affinities.

The perfection of this type, however, is not reached at one stroke. *The Comical Revenge* is an unequal play, still encumbered by an admixture of tragi-comedy; the parts written in rhymed verse are feeble, but the prose moves with a very pretty deftness. The work is already quite artificial, without substance, but animated by a felicitous touch of gay cynicism, and of light-heartedness; while the character of Sir Frederick Frollick is the first sketch of the young impertinent fop, who is destined to be the favourite hero of Restoration comedy. *She Would if She Could* marks a decisive progress; the writer has found himself, and is conscious of what he wants and of what he can do. It is entirely and unreservedly the piquant mockery of fashionable vices, the occasion for a satire that is evidently working hand in hand with what it pretends to be engaged in condemning. The tone is still more cynical, the liberty of language more light and witty. Although the dissimulated coarseness only breaks out in sudden and brutal sallies, the abdication of all moral exigencies will never be more complete. *The Man of Mode* is the example of an art that has reached the perfection of its form, and in which the poverty of the matter, of observation, is revealed in a somewhat dry precision of outline. In contrast with Sir Fopling, the exquisite infatuated with French fashions, Dorimant represents a more subdued and more national replica of the same type; for already the reaction of patriotic instincts against the excess of foreign influence is here perceptible, as in the theatre itself of Wycherley. But the coxcomb is buoyed up by a disdainful gaiety of ridiculous spirit, an impudent liveli-

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, which blunt the edge of comedy; and the satire is lost in merry play of a fastidious irony.

The resemblance with the brilliant, fine art of Congreve is iking; and one would be tempted to over-emphasize the fact, one did not notice in Etherege a more forward note of disre-pect, a more pronounced debauchery in thought, something ounger, and also a less sustained brilliance. There is also a uggestion, in certain words, of a secret sense of the vanity of cynicism, and, as it were, of an ill-satisfied longing of the heart. But this is only in a kind of farther background, and scarcely perceptible.

Congreve was to take up the comedy of Etherege, and enrich it, raising it still higher. The inspiration which animates the robust and biting plays of Wycherley[1] is quite different. With him, satire remains just as far from an austere ideal, and lets itself be carried away by the enthusiasm of a gay immorality; but the game is no longer self-satisfying. The elements of an inner protestation show themselves: the revolt of a strong personality, with an inner bent to bitterness, against the madness which is sweeping it along, and which it judges while giving itself up to it. In the realism of Wycherley there is a violence in which can be seen, not an exasperated cynicism, but the impetuosity of a scorn, all the more frank in that it has no appearances to save, and does not except itself from what it condemns It is the elementary moral reaction of a nature that is not wholly bereft o all sense of a moral life. To venture farther would be ha ardous; nothing in Wycherley reveals a romantic sensibility; an his gaiety is not the ironical mask that would serve to conceal secret melancholy. But one has too often erred in the oppos

[1] Born in 1640, in Shropshire, came of an old family, sojourned as a young in France and frequented the salon of the Duchess de Montausier, where he f an atmosphere impregnated by the spirit of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Returni England at the Restoration, he entered upon a life of pleasure in London. success of his first play, *Love in a Wood*, staged in 1671, brought him into with the Court. *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1671 or '72), *The C Wife* (1673), *The Plain Dealer* (1674), followed in quick succession. Wycherley retired from the stage, contracted a rich marriage which prov appointing, traversed a period of financial embarrassment, and lived unt enjoying the pleasures of his literary friendships. In his last years, he w nected with Pope, to whom he submitted his poems for correction *Plays* W. C. Ward (Mermaid Series), 1888; *Complete Works*, ed. by M. Summe *The Country Wife, The Plain Dealer*, ed. by G. B Churchill, 1924 S Perromat, *Wycherley*, Paris, 1921; G. B. Churchill, *The Originality of W.* ley (Schelling Anniv. Papers), 1923.

direction; one has only searched in his work for a baseness of soul and the cold desire of scandal. The coarseness of his plays is at once due to an observation of manners, to the desire to please public taste, and to the insulting mockery of this taste as of these manners. And if, finally, a play, the intention of which is not by any means dishonourable, happens to be far from edifying, it is because the author, just as the society to whom he addresses himself, has lost the very sense of delicacy and shame.

In this lies first the interest of Wycherley's work. He fulfilled all the necessary conditions to give a true picture of a social reality that was limited, particular, but intensely characteristic: he was a man of the world, part and parcel of its life; and, on the other hand, his temperament had sufficient solidity to ensure him his independence, a personal angle of vision, distinct from that of the rake, similar enough to that of the average man. Less indolent and less of a dilettante than Etherege, he paints in stronger colours, and lends a greater relief to everything; and what his art emphasises, is just the original traits of his epoch, drawn with a touch both frank and insolent.

His comedy thus shows us a state of manners, the field of which, narrow in itself, requires defining—the Court, the fashionable centres of the capital—but the example of which radiates even to the farthermost parts of the provinces, and there creates, as it were, superficial contagions; attracts to it, on the other hand, moral elements of the same nature; and thus does play the part of that typical form of civilisation, in which an age can most often be summed up. Young noblemen, dressed in the French style, beribboned and bewigged, straining after wit and very susceptible about their honour; ladies for whom face patches and rouge have no longer any secret, and provocative beneath the enigma of their masks; burgesses, as greedy as they are crafty, anxious, and not without reason, about the chastity of their wives; plays, pleasure haunts, fashionable groves and gardens; suggestive conversations, intrigues, billets-doux and appointments—it is like a fairly brilliant copy, but overcharged and carried to a brutal licentiousness, of gallant life such as the personal tastes of Louis XIV. encouraged. Wycherley has described all this in a lively, animated, coloured picture, no doubt intensified by the optics of the stage, but in no way exaggerated. There is skill and talent in the portrait, despite the fact that it is simple and even rough in its manner; and the painter has

wn how to bring in individual traits to set off general effects;
to catch, as for example in *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*,
craze for foreign customs, French or Spanish; or, as in *The*
ain Dealer, the features of lawyers and of their victims.
The art of Wycherley, robust as it is, is often rudimentary.
is plays have conspicuous faults. From the first to the last, no
oubt, there is evidence of a marked progress towards the
mancipation and purification of the form. The plot in *Love*
n a Wood is of a quite superficial complexity, from which the
succeeding comedies tend to free themselves. But the action still
is moved by rather conventional springs, and develops according
to rhythms that are expected and monotonous; the tricks of con-
struction are crude. There is no very fine psychology in the
delineation of character, and it is rarely that the personages can-
not be summed up in one single trait. The best known, such as
Widow Blackacre (*Plain Dealer*), are the puppets of too obvi-
ous automatisms. Finally, the author's numerous borrowings,
chiefly those he has taken from Molière, enable us to make
comparisons which are not usually to his advantage. Whatever
may be thought of *The Plain Dealer*, it seems difficult to see in
it, as certain critics have seen, an improved replica of the *Misan-*
thrope.

But, on the other hand, Wycherley has solid merits. The
surest is the truth, the life of the dialogue, its self-impelling
force which, as with Molière, makes one retort produce another;
the verve which infuses an irresistible movement into many
scenes, and draws new effects from banal situations. The dry
ness of the moral atmosphere is at times mitigated by a breath of
freshness, all too fugitive, as at certain moments, around th
figure of Hippolita (*The Gentleman Dancing-Master*). A
the pleasant, gay play of wit, in some episodes where the ple
ure-seekers vie each with the other in conversation, comes u
us as a kind of release, which somewhat soothes the crudit
the rest. But the most original quality in Wycherley, and
surest sign of the secret idealism of his thought, is the philos
which instils an after-taste of healthy bitterness into the
icism, and makes the character of the Plain Dealer, despite
thing, a strong and personal creation; the symbol of a fu
incoherent, powerless anger of the traditional English te
ment, against the treachery of a refined corruption whi
through the senses, dominates its intellect, and

nothing free save the fitful straining of its will. Popular instinct has not erred in the matter; much more than the rather effaced personage of Freeman, the Philinte of Wycherley, it is Manly, a brutal and ferocious Alceste, who represents the troubled, violent depth of his experience of life.

Restoration comedy is a fruitful kind of literature. Society furnished for the amusement of an idle public certain general oppositions, such as that of the fashionable circles, to which the greater part of the spectators belonged, and of the town middle class, which remained in the majority faithful to the spirit of Puritanism, and which the theatre shows us in the most malevolent light. From those antitheses, and from the situations they naturally lead to; from the spectacle of elegant debauchery in its struggle with vulgar hypocrisy; from the theme of conjugal misfortune, above all, treated endlessly under all its aspects, are born the ordinary types of the plot, to which the imitation of the foreign theatre brings the chance of renewal, and elements of particularity. Few of those plays are really of no value to the historian, so naïvely faithful is the testimony they bring concerning the manners or spirit of the epoch. A study of less limited proportions than the present would distinguish in them, besides the comedy of manners—the most interesting—that of "humours" derived from Jonson; that of plot for its own sake, imitated from Spain; that in which farce is the dominant element; lastly, that in which we have a foretaste of sentimental seriousness.

Several works, however, cannot be passed over in this rapid survey: *The Mulberry Garden* (1668) of the poet Charles Sedley,[1] which, with its amusing figures of young coxcombs, its witty repartees, continues the first efforts of Etherege, and seems to mark the transition between them and the earlier works of Wycherley; *Epsom Wells* (1672), *The Squire of Alsatia* (1688), and *Bury Fair* (1689) of Shadwell,[2] plays heavily written, clumsily constructed, but curious on account of the picture they give of realistic scenes—watering-places, the lower life of London, popular festivals; *The Rover, or The Banished Cava-*

[1] See above, chap. ii. sect. 6.

[2] Thomas Shadwell, 1642-1692. *Select Plays*, ed. by Saintsbury, Mermaid Series, 1903; *Complete Works*, ed. by M. Summers, 1927. It seems difficult to find in him a writer of the first order, or to pronounce him, despite certain analogies, a predecessor of Congreve. (For the opposite argument see A. Nicoll, *Restoration Drama*, 1923.)

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s, a play in two parts (1677-80) by Mrs. Behn,[1] who by her
ied production, her coloured descriptions, her lively dialogue,
r adumbration of feminism, her relative decency of bearing,
an original figure in the literature of the time; and *The Coun-*
y Wit (1676), *Sir Courtly Nice* (1685), of John Crowne,[2]
here the invention is rather droll, and the tone still very far
rom delicate, but where the political themes, the moralising
ntentions, reveal in a way the secret working of minds.

Very diverse elements, for the most part borrowed, and asso-
ciated indifferently in a loose action; feebly conceived characters,
who almost always can be reduced to types so often repeated as
to become conventional; verve, movement, sometimes wit, a force
of comedy, exterior but undeniable; realism, scurrility, licen-
tiousness; all of it significant, artistically poor, but rich in docu-
mentary value; such is, generally speaking, the comedy of the
Restoration, as soon as the two or three main personalities are
left out of account.

5. *The National Reaction in Drama: Dryden, Lee and Otway.*—Between 1675 and 1680 a marked renascence of the
national spirit reveals itself in English literature. The inevi-
table reaction of the deeper instincts against the excess of worldly
corruption, and the very first signs of a moral awakening; the
political opposition to the government of Charles II., the Prot-
estant unrest, the agitation which precedes and accompanies th
"Popish Plot"; the shame of the subjection, suspected, if no
fully known, of the English monarchy to France, and the fea
inspired by the ambition of Louis XIV.; lastly, the fatigue whi
was at length provoked by the dominating influence of Fren
art and fashions; all contribute to this secret movement towa
the re-possession and re-assertion of the national self, which
not henceforth be checked, and of which the Revolution of 1
will be the decisive success. This reaction is clearly visibl
the drama, and more especially can be seen in the wor
Dryden.

Some signs, at an early date, had pointed to it. Side by
with heroic tragedy, so steeped in a foreign spirit, could be
the survival of the Elizabethan tradition, very badly unde
it is true; and new authors had tried to revive it. Her

[1] 1640-1689 See chap. ii. sect. 6. *Works*, ed. by Summers, 6 vols.,
V. Sackville-West, 1927.
[2] ...1712. *Dramatic Works*, ed. by Maidment and Logan, 1873-77;
... *His Life and Dramatic Works*, 1922.

we come upon the name of John Wilson. His *Andronicus Commenius* (1644) is a forcible drama, of a concentrated intensity of a firm style, which by striking analogies recalls Shakespeare's *Richard III.,* and through its merits bears such a comparison without dishonour; but which, to be classed as worthy of Shakespearean lineage, lacks only the highest poetic imagination. Save for a very short passage, it is written in blank verse, of fine quality.

The return to blank verse is the sign of the decisive evolution in the dramatic career of Dryden. Scarcely three years after *Aureng-Zebe,* he is treating a subject upon which Shakespeare had placed his mark; and without plagiarising, through the very force of his personality, he extracts from it a tragedy, the merit of which may have been exaggerated, but which wins our keen approval, if not our admiration (*All for Love*). "In my style, I have professed to imitate the divine Shakespeare; which that I might perform more freely, I have disencumbered myself from rhyme" (Preface). The verse, indeed, if it has not yet all the desirable ease, gains from this liberation a suppleness of movement, in which English criticism seems rightly to see a necessary condition of tragic style.

At the same time, Dryden's critical essays reveal the change that has taken place in his thought. The preface he wrote for his adaptation of *Troilus and Cressida* (*The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy,* 1679), shows throughout a just, strong, and yet qualified appreciation of all the greatness of Shakespeare. Between the classical doctrine, derived from Aristotle, explained by Le Bossu and Rapin in France, and by Rymer in England, to which Dryden wishes to remain faithful, and, on the other hand, the technique of the Elizabethan romanticists, he here establishes a deliberate reconciliation. The irregularities of Shakespeare are admitted, accounted for from the point of view of his time; and the superiority of his genius is established in relation, either to the moderns, or to his contemporaries Fletcher and Jonson, or even to the ancients. And in the eyes of Dryden, it is Shakespeare, no doubt, who is thus reunited with the true classicism, of which he appears the supreme representative; but, in fact, classicism thus broadened is no longer the ideal which English tragedy during the last twenty years had seemed to follow; for Dryden places the deeper vitality of the Shakespearean plays in the creation of characters, and this creation is the work

ntuition, not of analysis. Such an inner difference betrays
essential divergence of the two arts, and is reflected in other
nes—that of action as that of form. To exalt Shakespeare
the highest degree of dramatic genius, is to propose a model
her than that of the unities as understood in France; and of
ese unities, Dryden now admits but a broad and free applica-
on. He claims that the mind of the English requires the mix-
ure of comedy and tragedy (Preface to *Don Sebastian*).

Even to the close of his life his critical doctrine was subject
to fluctuation; and his practice was to be in no wise different.
The last twenty years of his career are very mixed; already
Troilus and Cressida remodelled Shakespeare rather irrever-
ently; an opera, *Albion and Albanius* (1685), and a dramatic
opera, *King Arthur* (1691), appear to be little less than sacri-
fices to contemporary taste. A drama, *Cleomenes* (1692), is
conceived and written, with a certain nobility and purity of line,
in close imitation of French tragedy. But these various forms
are animated by a new spirit of freedom and artistic virility, to
which the use of blank verse, henceforward strictly adhered to
(save in opera), only gives a tangible expression. This spirit
is to be found concentrated in the tragic parts of *The Spanish
Friar*; and, above all, in a fine drama, *Don Sebastian* (1690),
where the action undoubtedly still recalls tragi-comedy, but
where serious scenes, of a sober pathos, alternate without clash-
ing with episodes of frank and crude gaiety. This play is, per-
haps, the model of what the dramatic art of Dryden coul
produce; it is a romantic work, but of a high romanticism, and i
it are to be felt broad horizons of thought as of heart.

Other writers obey the same influences at the same tin
Between 1675 and 1685 one witnesses a momentary revival
the English drama of the national type, or rather, of a m
type, in which the national element becomes again more
sciously essential. The tragedies of Crowne (*Thyestes*, 1
etc.) are hardly to be connected with the Elizabethan tradi
save in the rather clumsy search for effects of imaginative
ror. With Lee and Otway, the connection is more brill
patent.

Nathaniel Lee[1] is a singular and pitiable figure. The

[1] Born about 1653, a graduate of Cambridge, he essayed acting as a f
but without success; his first play was *Nero* (1675), he then wrote heroic
(*Sophonisba*, *Gloriana*, 1676); next came dramas in blank verse: *The Riv*
Mithridates (1678), *Theodosius* (1680); *Cæsar Borgia* (168

of an unbalanced nature is upon his talent and his work. His short existence was darkened by mental troubles, his end hastened by excesses. He seems to have led, like Wycherley in his youth, a life of feverish excitement and pleasure; and like him, to have reaped from it a sense of bitter disgust (Dedication to *The Rival Queens*). But this duality of soul is here much more pronounced; and Lee is properly speaking a romanticist.

He is, above all, a belated Elizabethan. In him reawakens the temperament of some among the decadent dramatists of the Renascence, with their tendency to frenzy and morbidity. This reviving is natural; but one also feels it to be, in some measure, artificial or at least voluntary, stimulated by a fashion of the day, by the success of heroic tragedy. This is the kind in which Lee makes his first attempts; then, at the same time as Dryden, he modifies his manner, and adopts blank verse. We really have here the rejection of a discipline, and the return to more instinctive habits. *The Rival Queens, Mithridates, Lucius Junius Brutus* may have found their subjects in ancient history (or in the contemporary French novel), and make a naïve display of erudition: one cannot conceive of plays less classical. The construction is weak, the psychology almost always rudimentary; and the style, setting aside the work of twenty years, is full of a bombast, a conceit, a bad taste, which takes us back to the very eve of the Restoration.

This impulsive liberty spends itself in fiery flights of imagination. The images of Lee are of an extravagant audacity, and animated by an extraordinarily sensual ardour. At intervals this frenzy becomes more sober, or better inspired, and then we are surprised by effects of energy, of suggestive power, of poetry, which recall the Elizabethans in a striking way. Or at times the East is evoked with a warmth and a grace that are young and full of fancy, recalling the touch of Marlowe. But these flashes of intuitive, spontaneous art are rare; the texture of the plays is of an almost purely verbal intensity, the exaggeration and monotony of which are extremely fatiguing. And in spite of all, the literary consciousness of an already critical age, the atmosphere of reason in which these furies resound, communicate to them something indefinably paradoxical. It seems

Junius Brutus (1681); *The Princess of Clèves* (1681); *Constantine the Great* (1682). He was confined in a madhouse in 1684, was liberated in 1689, and died as a result of his drinking excesses in 1692. *Works*, 2 vols., 1713; 3 vols., 1734-6. See the study by Auer, Berlin, 1904.

to suppose that Lee's sickly, nervous exaltation is the gen-
e tone of his sensibility; but he lets himself go without the
st control, and loses all idea of measure or decency. The
y in which he has transposed the *Princesse de Clèves* is a scan-
l in art. His work remains interesting as a psychological
roblem; aided by the playing of great actors, his violence found
avour on the stage; but if the renascence of national tradition
ad not had any other expression, it is not certain that it would
have been fruitful. . . .

The still somewhat feverish, but more balanced talent of Otway [1] has better justified this rebirth, and given it its masterpiece in drama. His career, parallel with that of Lee, traverses fairly analogous phases; if he adopts blank verse at a slightly later date, it is as the result of a ripe decision, and in full possession of himself. Among his heroic tragedies, *Don Carlos* has some merit; but his other attempts are negligible, and everything is eclipsed by the two dramas, *The Orphan* and *Venice Preserved*, the brilliant and the durable success of which still assures their author of a living fame. It is even permissible to think that the first of these plays is, really, not on a par with the second. *Venice Preserved* is a unique achievement, and must be looked upon as such; a solitary work, unequalled in the half-century which preceded it, or in the century which came after. Its importance in literature is none the less for it; because if it remains exceptional by its quality, it is not so by the inspiration that animates it. The tragic temperament of Otway is a las[t] excrescence of the Elizabethan vein, on which the various influ[-]
ences of the time have strongly left their mark. It is not of [a]
different nature from that of Lee; it unites scattered tendenci[es]
one might say that it eminently represents the short and l[...]
reawakening of the dramatic genius of the Renascence. I[t is]
significant that the Restoration, in its troubled and still
assured rationalism, should have experienced such a surviva[l of]
the romantic past.

The most curious feature of the work is the intimate [...]

[1] Thomas Otway, born in 1652, took to acting like Lee; despite several [...]
successes, his life was one of struggle, and he died in poverty in 1685. Hi[s ...]
opened with heroic tragedies in rhymed verse: *Alcibiades*, 1675, *Don Carlo[s ...]*
he translated the *Bérénice* of Racine and the *Scapin* of Molière; wrote [...]
comedies (*The Soldier's Fortune*, 1681, etc.); and two tragedies in blan[k ...]
[*The Or*]*phan*, 1680; *Venice Preserved*, 1682. *Select Plays*, ed by Roden No[el ...]
[...] *Complete Works*, ed by M. Summers, 1926. See th[e ...]
[...] Vienna, 1902.

coherent fusion of this romanticism with something at least of the classical spirit. Despite the frenzied outbursts of *Venice Preserved,* there is evidence of a certain disciplining of the intellect. The intense pathos of the drama is carried on, managed, according to a clever progression, though at times it goes beyond the limits of moral sensibility, and has recourse to wholly physical means. Otway's rhetoric is able to adapt itself to the jerks, the sudden breaks of a passionate, breathless dialogue. His verse, more unequal and rough than that of Lee, has solid merits. There is a sequence, as there is a depth, in the characters. The play is really built upon a psychological base: it is the tragedy of friendship, stronger and higher than love. The action, rapid and concentrated, leads on to an inevitable catastrophe; a bitter, sad emotion radiates from each stage in the unfolding of the fate at work, even if the painting of tenderness and of its sorrows appeals less to the heart than to the nerves.

Despite weak points, lengthy passages, some rant, the play as a whole preserves a fine artistic tenor. The violent, cruel realism of the comic parts, where, under the name of Antonio, the Earl of Shaftesbury is put on the stage, does not destroy the sombre atmosphere of the drama; and the effect of harmony through contrast is faithful to the very essence of Shakespearean æsthetics. The most penetrating note of the work is a kind of bitter pessimism, whose personal, tormented accent is explained by the life of Otway, by his unfortunate passion for Mrs. Barry, and his approaching death.

To be consulted: Beljame, *Public et Hommes de Lettres en Angleterre, etc.,* 1897; *Cambridge History of English Literature,* vol. viii. chap. v., vii.; Canfield, *Corneille and Racine in England,* 1904; Charlanne, *Influence Française en Angleterre au xvii^e Siècle,* 1906; L. N. Chase, *The English Heroic Play,* 1903; Courthope, *History of English Poetry,* vol. iv., 1903; B. Dobrée, *Restoration Comedy, 1660-1720,* 1924; Eccles, *Racine in England,* 1922; Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *Relations between Spanish and English Literature,* 1910; Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration . . . to 1830,* 10 vols., 1832; Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Comic Writers,* 1819; Harvey-Jellie, *Les Sources du théâtre anglais de la Restauration,* 1906; K. M. Lynch, *The Social Mode of Restoration Comedy,* 1926; Macaulay, *Essay on Leigh Hunt* (the Dramatic Works of Wycherley, etc.), 1841; Miles, *The Influence of Molière on Restoration Comedy,* 1910; Nettleton, *English Drama of the Restoration, etc.,* 1914; A. Nicoll, *History of Restoration Drama, 1660-1700,* 1923; Palmer, *The Comedy of Manners,* 1913; Pendlebury, *Dryden's Heroic Plays,* 1923; H. T. E. Perry, *The Comic Spirit in Restoration Drama,* 1925; *Restoration Plays,* etc., introd. by Gosse (Everyman's Library), 1912; H. E. Rollins, *A Contribution to the History of English Commonwealth Drama* (Studies in Philology, July 1921); Schelling, *English Drama,* 1914; A. H. Thorndike, *Tragedy,* 1908; Ward, *History of English Dramatic Literature,* 1899.

CHAPTER V

RATIONALISM AND RESTORATION PROSE

1. *The Philosophy of Reason; Hobbes, Newton.*—The rational character of the Restoration is clearly seen in the domain of general ideas on man, nature, and society. During the reign of Puritanism, the spirit of the Middle Ages had returned in strength against modern science and philosophy, to which the work of Bacon had given a decisive expression. The Civil War and the Protectorate coincide with a revival of scholasticism, a vogue in astrological studies, and a flourishing of all popular beliefs. The return of the king, the re-establishment of moral and social values upon traditional and fixed bases, give sovereign scope to the psychological reaction which is inevitable; an immense craving for lucidity and order tends to institute Reason as the legislator of thought as of life.

But it would be easy to exaggerate the philosophic consequences of this craving. The rationalism of the Restoration is much more a diffuse quality, the most common element, perhaps the main element, of inward attitudes and acts, than it is th[e] inspiring force of a great number of systems. The aversion o[f] the English temperament to abstract, hard doctrines, its prefe[rence] for the concrete, its docility with regard to experience, a[re] already racial traits. Here rationality is most often found ass[o]ciated with empiricism, stretching it, if one may so say, to [its] highest reach, but not leaving it behind to the point of oppos[ing] it. On the other hand, religious authority, civil power, and e[stablished] manners, however free these may be, repress the boldest vent[ures] of opinion and of language, and, above all, the written and [estab]lished formula of extreme conclusions; the taste for, and [culti]vation of, prudent compromises continue to exist, even [in an] age which has carried boldness of speech and laxity of mor[als to] a degree never before witnessed in England. While pure r[ation]alism is the actual practice of a fairly large number of th[e] ... fewer are found to profess it.

Despite these reserves, the fact remains that a broad and
eep current of rational thought derived from the sources them-
elves of the Renaissance, flows on throughout the first half of
he seventeenth century, below the stream of Puritanism, and
ts course attains the second half without being broken. Scarcely
nas Cromwell consolidated his personal power, when it again
comes to the surface. The Restoration allows it to spread out
with relative freedom. The intellectual characteristics of this
age are thus the issue, not only of a reaction, but of a continuous
development, as well as of certain immediate causes.

Bacon had drawn up the programme of the general effort by which modern thought, rebelling against the yoke of scholasticism, was to explore and get acquainted with reality. His doctrine is a force at work everywhere; but he does not seem to have had any immediate successors. On the eve of the Restoration, those thinkers who are tempted by the need for lucidity and order, turn readily to the philosophy of Descartes, which is then radiating throughout Europe. The University of Cambridge, the most active centre of English philosophy at this epoch, is at the same time a focus of rationalist ideas, and the seat of a renascence of Platonic idealism. With the first movement of ideas can be connected such thinkers as Whichcote; the doctrine of Descartes is in great favour at Christ's College; but Henry More and Cudworth adopt it as a point of departure for original speculations, which are to carry them to different, almos
mystical views.

Thus Cartesianism, with its logical severity, has a stron
effect upon minds, but stimulates rather than subjugates ther
Just as in France, it provokes, in England, an instinctive resis
ance on the part of such temperaments as are startled by t
boldness of its method and of its initial negations, and are r
sufficiently reassured by the spiritualistic conclusions it has
offer. On the other hand, this very spiritualism is what ali
ates the greatest English philosopher of the seventeenth c
tury, Thomas Hobbes,[1] a thinker of exceptional quality, in wl

[1] Born in 1588, died in 1678, Hobbes formed a link between the Renais
and the Restoration; travelled on the Continent, sojourned in France from 1
1651, where he made the acquaintance of Father Mersenne and sent to Des
his objection to the *Meditations*. His doctrines attracted the attention
Roman Catholic clergy and he returned to England where he succeede
without difficulty, in being left alone. After 1660 he owed much to the
of Charles II. His philosophical works were late productions: *Elements o*

dical empiricism, pushed to its limit, produces a singular ture of fearless reason and cold practical realism.

The system of Hobbes, although fully worked out in all its ts before 1660, belongs none the less, by virtue of its ten-cies, to the Restoration. It harmonises with the scepticism pregnated by science which at that time forms the basis, knowledged or secret, of many minds. It gives the serious sup-ort of a doctrine to the infidelity and free-thinking of the fash-onable wits. In the eyes of the general public, it represents the ost dangerous effort of Reason against orthodoxy. One of he causes of the relative impunity with which it comes forward resides in the definitely monarchic character of its political con-clusions. While it could well be a source of uneasiness to consciences, it served the interests of the sovereign, and conse-crated the need for stability in a society that had felt the upheaval of civil struggles. It justified, from the philosophic point of view, the attempt made by the last representatives of the Stuart dynasty to escape from parliamentary control.

Just as with Descartes, it was Hobbes' desire to build up a connected explanation of this thought, and the larger works in which he interprets it follow a preconceived plan One may see in his metaphysics and in his psychology a first application to the theory of the world and the soul, of the explanatory formulæ proposed by modern physics. The system of Galileo established a mechanical order in the movements of the heavenly bodies. Hobbes reduces all the material universe to movement; and by a daring analogy, attaining at one stroke the most daring views entertained by scientific monism in the nineteenth century he reduces to the same principle the whole moral universe o mind and society.

Our sensations and our ideas, he says, are bound up wi physical causes, and, indeed, are of one nature with theirs. C responding to the action of the exterior world upon us, there on our part a reaction of positive or negative appetite; an

Natural and Politic (circulated in manuscript, 1640), *De Cive* (1642, trans into English under the title of *Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Govern and Society*, 1651); *Leviathan*, 1651, *De Corpore*, 1655, etc. The last peri his life was spent in controversy and in literary works such as a translation *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, 1676 *Works*, ed by Molesworth, 16 vols, 18 *Leviathan*, ed by Walker, 1904. See the studies by G Lyon (*The Philoso Hobbes*), 1893; Sir L. Stephen, 1904; Taylor, 1909, R. Gadave, *T H. a Theories of the Social Contract*, etc., 1907; G. Catbin, *T. H*, 1922.

general expression of these desires is the whole law of morality. But while moral law is that of an absolute individualism, life is only compatible with the reciprocal limitation of egoisms. From the natural state of things, which is that of the war of each against all, there necessarily springs a social pact; the individual places himself under the protection of a master, either a personal sovereign or a chosen body, whose power, if it is to be efficacious, must recognise no other rule than that of its own will. The only alternative to the absolute authority of an individual or collective sovereign is anarchy; spiritual power derives all its force from civil power; in the case of a conflict, it is the latter, and not the former, which carries the day. Theocracy, whether Catholic or Puritan, is a monstrous anomaly. In the "kingdom of darkness"—for it is thus that Hobbes symbolises the errors of social organisation—the Church rises up as the rival of political supremacy, of this great collective being, a true "Leviathan," whose gigantic body embraces that of all citizens; and, abusing her spiritual prestige, crushes the growing minds of the young, in the universities, with a science that is wholly verbal. . . .

Such is this doctrine, so bold and so strangely prescient, which seems to anticipate the materialism of modern physics, the sensualist and associationist psychology, the ethics of utilitarianism, and the sociology of the Positivists. In one bound it reaches conclusions of so advanced a nature, that English thought will not follow it. The shock it gives to minds will no doubt be reverberated for a long time; eighteenth-century deism will be much indebted to it. But the more moderate empiricism of Locke will be more directly efficacious. Hobbes, while he is a philosopher, is also a vigorous, clear-thinking writer, of a sobriety as compact as it is powerful, of a logical cogency always firm and always easy to grasp. By virtue of its precision, pruned of all useless ornament, and its restrained note of imaginative ardour, the style of his English works affords an outstanding example of the transition towards classical prose.

The intellectual influences, continental as well as English, which give rise to the doctrine of Hobbes, explain the awakening and diffusion of the scientific spirit in England. From Bacon's time, induction had become a recognized method; the observation of nature was more and more tending to replace scholastic discussions; Harvey had discovered the circulation of

blood. Even in the days of Puritanism, more than one inves- ator was carrying out secret experiments which had as much do with alchemy or magic as with chemistry, and which ran e risk of being sternly punished by the secular arm. The estoration at once brought science into fashion. During his ojourn on the Continent the king had acquired a taste for anat- omies; he cuts up bodies for his personal recreation, and his courtiers imitate him. In this atmosphere, the granting of a charter to the Royal Society for the advancement of science (1662) is quite a natural act.[1] Its object is to bring into touch with one another those minds that are keen on the knowledge of accurate facts, chiefly in the spheres of mathematics and physics. It serves to bring together not only those who are scientists by profession, such as Robert Boyle, but men of the world, and writers; Dryden, Evelyn, Cowley, Pepys himself, take an interest in its work. Among its first founders are also to be numbered two future bishops, John Wilkins and Seth Ward. Thus science is henceforth less suspiciously viewed; it mixes broadly with the social life of the time; and the day is no longer distant when it will be considered abnormal for a man of culture to overlook its claims. No doubt, there is still a little naïvete in the attraction which drives certain members of the Roya Society to physical researches; Samuel Butler pens a satire (*Th Elephant in the Moon*) against one of them. But the discov eries of Boyle on the relation of the volume to the pressure gases give the new society every right to be respected. And, 1672, Newton[2] reads before it his first note on the compositi of white light.

Newton has no place, as a writer, in the history of Eng literature. Latin is the medium which he employs for the w wherein is expounded the theory of universal gravitation. this discovery, and that of infinitesimal calculation, throug preparatory work leading up to them, through all the mov of thought and research which precedes them, and in ad through all the controversies which they call forth, fill t years of the Restoration with a stir of scientific activity contemporaries feel that something great is in the makin

[1] Its origin dates back to 1645; the register of its meetings begins in
[2] Sir Isaac Newton, born in 1642, died in 1727. His great work. *Principia Mathematica*, was published in 1687.

efforts of "mechanical philosophy" are unravelling the secrets the universe. Reason now definitively establishes its claims direct thought as well as life. Henceforward, this thesis is longer disputed; the eighteenth century, and the age of clas-ism, find in it one of their essential certitudes.

2. *Religious Rationalism; Barrow, South, Tillotson, etc.*—eligious thought, in its turn, becomes impregnated with the ationalism of philosophy and science. Within the Anglican Church, the "latitudinarian" tendency is already in evidence dur-ng the troubled period that precedes the Restoration; in Cam-bridge it numbers several illustrious representatives, such as Whichcote. In its beginnings, it is connected by intellectual affinities with the Platonism of More and Cudworth; but soon the rationalistic current and the mystic current diverge; the lat-ter, menaced by the withering atmosphere of a hostile age, seeks a course apart, and must be considered as one of the various intellectual movements in deep disagreement with the spirit of the times.

The latitudinarians tend to broaden Christian doctrine; they lay stress upon common beliefs, upon what unites sects, not what divides them. Their notion of faith and its proofs thus devel-ops towards a pure matter of reason; they react against the enthusiastic zeal of the Puritans, against the extreme forms of the personal interpretation of Scripture. They provide the con-necting link between science and religion; Whichcote's desire is to apply the inductive method of Bacon to apologetics; Joseph Glanvill,[1] chaplain to Charles II., is a member of the Royal Society. Despite the attacks directed against it, the latitudi-narian spirit spreads; it is the natural corollary of the tolerance towards which secular society is tending, and which is established by the Revolution of 1688; lastly, it inspires most of the Res-toration theologians and preachers.

Theirs is a theology of Reason. The most vigorous an no doubt, the most typical of these Christian thinkers, Isa Barrow,[2] is the predecessor of Newton in a Chair of Math

[1] The *Scepsis Scientifica* (1665) and the *Plus Ultra, or the Progress Advancement of Knowledge*, 1668, by this writer, are of special interest and nificance. See F. Greenslet, *J. Glanvill, A Study in English Thought and Le of the Seventeenth Century*, 1900.

[2] 1630-77; sojourned in Paris, and travelled in the East; was Profess Greek, then of Mathematics, and Master of Trinity College, Cambridge; a

ics at Cambridge; he disserts upon the mysteries of faith all the rigour of a scientist. A demonstration, with him, er loses sight of the ideal of a series of terms logically con- cted. His *Commentary on Dominical Prayer* explains the ties of love and charity as obligations of clear-sighted wisdom; e *Commentary on the Decalogue* transposes all the Divine Commandments into appeals to good sense, to which an upright mind cannot turn a deaf ear. The treatise *On Papal Supremacy* s a long argument of severe sobriety, and one that aims at being wholly scientific. Belief here is a purely intellectual thing; it is the outcome, with an absolute necessity, of an enlightened judgment; accurate formulæ can take in all its substance. Thus, the element of mysticism is effaced from religion; the very passage in which St. Luke puts into the mouth of the angel the "glad tidings" of the Nativity, serves as matter for a wholly rational development.

But theology most often is merged in ethics. The latter are frankly utilitarian. Barrow insists in the most simple and direct way upon the advantageous consequences of virtue; to render unto God and unto men what is due to them is to acquire, without the fear of any possible disappointment, a claim to a substantial reward, wherein the good things of this world have heir part, just as those of the other. Here again, everything is matter of reason, of intelligence; morality is a question of self-interest wisely understood. A Providential association connect success, fortune, honours, a long life, and immortality, with th practice of certain rules which are taught by tradition, and whic reflection establishes. An active and sensible life of indust is thus, whatever happens, the path to salvation.

There is nothing less mystical than this notion of ethi nothing which better corresponds, in return, with the deepest most stable instincts of the average English conscience, w reaches its mature stage at the very moment when the spiri modern England is definitively finding itself. The conte raries and rivals of Barrow do not teach any other for wisdom. South [1] studies the conditions of durable pleasur

ber of the Royal Society. His theological works comprise nine volumes Napier, Cambridge, 1859).

[1] Robert South, 1634-1716; lived at Oxford, where he was the rec academic honours and ecclesiastical prebends. His *Sermons* were publis 1841.

finds them in a judicious moderation. Tillotson[1] renders thanks to God in that He has concealed from the wicked the advantages of uprightness, whilst according to the just a better understanding. . . .

South, Tillotson and Stillingfleet[2] were primarily teachers. With them pulpit eloquence acquired a brilliance which, in the last years of the seventeenth century, was thought dazzling, but which has since singularly paled. Their art shows negative qualities; a faculty of clear reasoning, of sensible argumentation; a well-behaved soberness; something easy and intelligible, persuasive even, provided the mind is not overruled by any hot conviction. These lucid and candid expositions, devoid of any sectarian narrowness and free from any passion of enthusiasm, appeal to the understanding of a reasonable age, and strengthen it in the decisions of its practical will. They have in them a sound rhetoric, and at times, a logical cogency; but nothing that resembles the noblest flights of oratorical inspiration.

This medium eloquence, which often appears cold to us, is not, however, to be despised. Sometimes one can feel in it the pent-up warmth of an inner fire, the ardour of a moral radiance. No matter how intellectual Barrow may be, there is in his work an animation, the source of which lies in a hidden sensibility. Tillotson, who was looked upon as the great Christian orator of the time, is at most a good writer of sermons; but his contemporary, South, is a genuine writer, whose vigour, breadth, and imaginative language preserve a reflected glow from the poetry of the Renascence.

Generally speaking, the style of those theologians and preachers finds its chief merit in the quiet facile light that plays upon it. Despite lingering traces of preciosity or pompousness, it has a markedly modern character. Supple and orderly, composed of well-balanced elements, and either of short sentences, or of adjusted and constructed periods, it is one of the major

[1] John Tillotson, 1630-94, after a Puritan youth, rallied to the Anglican cause in which he represented the latitudinarian tendency; became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1691. His sermons were widely read and admired in his day and during the ensuing epoch. *Works*, 10 vols., 1820.

[2] Edward Stillingfleet, 1635-99, Bishop of Worcester; published in 1662 *Origines Sacrae*, a rational explication of the Christian Faith. His sermons, which were highly esteemed, and his controversial works propound the Anglican doctrine of the golden mean that lay half-way between Roman Catholicism and the liberalism of Locke. *Works*, 1710.

s, as it is an instrument, of the progress of classical prose. yden liked to acknowledge his debt to Tillotson; and it can be mitted that he did owe him something; though this homage obably is no less generously exaggerated than that which he aid to Waller, when he extolled the fecundity of the poetic xample the latter had set him.

3. *History: Clarendon, Burnet. Memorialists: Evelyn, Pepys, etc.*—The Restoration is an age of history, as of satire and comedy. The critical activities of thought, the application of an awakened reflection to events and to men, a more conscious interest taken by life in itself, go to explain the simultaneous development of these kinds which are linked up by an obvious affinity. Society was emerging from a period of dramatic restlessness; after having lived through or experienced great happenings, people would readily indulge in the pleasure of recording them. A new era was beginning, and the present was opening up more widely towards the future; stimulated by the feeling of this novelty, and of a quicker political and moral change, observers frequently set to work to note the visible stages of the movement, and the facts of every day. Thus, the general progress of thought and analysis inclines men's minds towards giving a clear account of the past; and the curiosity inseparable from an age of transition urges them to place upon record the detailed history of the present. Historians, writers of diaries an memoirs, are now numerous.[1]

Clarendon, the statesman, and High Chancellor under Ki Charles II., infuses into his account of the Civil War, of wh he was a witness, the spirit of the Restoration in poli and religion.[2] A party man, of penetrating discernment wide culture, he looks upon history as a kind of arresting s

[1] To this date also and after an obscure evolution of half a century c traced the rise of the modern press. The need felt by the educated cla be put into touch with the important news of the moment, and this with s guarantees, favoured the creation and success of the *London Gazette* (at *Oxford Gazette*), 1665 For an account of this, see the *Cambridge Hi English Literature*, vol. vii chap. xv , and Williams, *History of English Jo to the Foundation of the Gazette*, 1908

[2] Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, born in 1608, was one of the ad Charles I. in his struggle with Parliament, accompanied the Prince abroad and returned with Charles II.; High Chancellor until 1667, ther he died in France in 1674. His *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wa land*, etc., was not published until the accession of Queen Anne, 1702-4 work he had written much of his own biography, which, at a later date, ... *Miscellaneous Works*, 1851

ment, explicative and persuasive, in which the regard for truth is subordinated to the interest of art and to the service of a cause. His great work, begun in 1646, is already modern by the breadth of the perspective, the careful planning of the whole, the handling of details, arranged in narratives that are long and full, and yet never wander. We have not here the deep probing after causes, the philosophy of a revolution; the information, wholly personal, is on a broad scale, but fallible, as the author's memory must be; conscientiousness, and the scrupulous attention to truth, are here neither a rule nor a torment; the narrator has not the sense of what objective research could be; he submits, in all good faith, to the requirements of the cause he is pleading. But it is pleaded with fullness, with a partiality that most often remains sober and becoming and with a certain epic nobility of thought that rises above all petty rancour and paltry passions. The interest of the pictures as of the narrations is only superseded by that of the portraits, broadly set up in full-length sketches, with method and care; of a fairly penetrating touch, that often attains to the soul, but where we feel that sympathy alone is the measure of justice, and that wherever it is lacking there is a distinct falling-off. The portrait or "character" is then in fashion; Clarendon had been able, during his stay in France, to see finished models of it; his own are drawn with obvious literary scruple, and rare felicity.

While by his analysis and lucidity he can be ranked as a modern, his style shows him to be still a transitional writer. Flowing along in an even, easy movement, his prose tends visibly towards the disintegration of periods, but remains periodic; this basic hesitation between an old and a new syntax makes it appear somewhat disjointed; moreover, the logical relations of the successive elements are awkwardly shown. Despite this embarrassment, the whole reads pleasantly, thanks to its variety, animation, and gift for picturesque precision.

One generation separates Clarendon from his inevitable rival, Gilbert Burnet.[1] The latter, by his mental outlook, still belongs to the Restoration; but it is with the classical age that this

[1] 1643-1715; a Scotsman, he upheld the cause of the Episcopalians; after 1674, became a preacher in London, was very popular, and gained the favour of the King, but lost this when he adopted an independent attitude towards the Duke of York and the attempts at a Roman Catholic Restoration. He advocated tolerance, sided with the Whig party, and was soon obliged to flee the kingdom; joined the Court of William of Orange in 1687, returned to England at the Revolution of 1688, and became Bishop of Salisbury. His important work is *The History of My*

od is connected through his work. His first writings are erior to the Revolution of 1688; he completes, shortly after oo, the part of his great work which deals with the reigns of arles II. and James II., and carries his narrative farther up the Treaty of Utrecht, shaping its course on that of events emselves. The progress of criticism with him is evidenced a more modern conception of history.

Burnet remains, above all, a moralist; his object is to instruct and edify his reader; to make known, as he says, "men and councils," leaving the gazettes to deal with the facts themselves. But if he aims at showing the inner forces at work, and seeks to judge souls, he does so with a keen desire to be impartial, "representing things in their natural colour, without art or artifice, with no regard whatsoever either for family ties or friendship, or for interests or parties. Has he kept strictly to this programme? More objective, no doubt, than Clarendon, Burnet did not escape the reproaches of his political adversaries. Less of an artist than his predecessor, he is not appreciably inferior to him in the penetrative skill of his portraits, which reveal a shrewd, pessimistic, and discriminating fund of psychological experience. His language, in one part analytical and balanced, remains in another inorganic and heavy, and still reminds us of that of Clarendon, without, however, possessing the other's force of imaginative suggestion. It bears the visible stamp of a more positive age, and of a drier thought.

Among the numerous memoirs of the Restoration, two biog raphies constitute in themselves a separate group; the genera resemblance of their subject-matters associates the one with th other, and also the piquant contrast of the personalities there revealed. *The Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, by his widow,[1] a the *Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle*, by his wi

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Own Time, a posthumous publication, 1724-35, which aroused a series of sp discussions in political circles and was severely attacked by Swift and the party; ed. by Airy, 1897, etc. In addition to numerous treatises, sermons, raphies, etc., mention should be made of the *History of the Reformation* *Church of England*, 1679-81; ed. by Pocock, 1875. See the biography of Cla Foxcroft, 1907.

[1] Lucy Apsley, born in 1620, married in 1638 John Hutchinson, who p rather important part in the Civil War, on the side of Parliament, and prison (1664). His biography, accompanied by several pages in wh Hutchinson describes her own youth, was not published until 1806 H. Child, 1904; ed. by Firth, 1906.

Lucas, while in Paris in 1645, married William, Marquis ho was a staunch supporter of the royal cause, sh

the duchess, are written at the same time: the first between 1664 and 1671; the second during the years preceding 1667. They paint two interesting figures for the historian, and set up in a natural opposition the traits of the Puritan, of ordinary birth, who builds up a life of political zeal and moral scruple upon the uneasy authority of conscience, and those of the great Royalist nobleman, a brilliant figure, expansive, in whose nature there still remains something of the old-time spirit of chivalry. But above all, these two parallel works reflect the characters of their individual authors. Mrs. Hutchinson and Lady Newcastle add to the piety of their conjugal affection a claim to culture and intellectuality which, for the time, remains exceptional, being outside the regular scope of feminine life; and this original ambition develops, with the one, into a feeling of self which is repressed by austere principles, but which is not altogether free from pride and hardness; with the other, into a somewhat extravagant preciosity, through which there comes out the charm of a rich and curious spontaneity. Neither the one nor the other is a writer of great talent; but Mrs. Hutchinson uses a careful, energetic style, a trifle oratorical, the syntax of which, however, is often impeded; while the Duchess of Newcastle owes the attraction of her pages to an ease which is wholly impulsive, and more in keeping with the irregular flow of a prose influenced but slightly yet by the spirit of classicism.

The *Mémoires du Comte de Grammont*, by Hamilton,[1] belong to French literature. The *Memoirs* of Sir John Reresby, the *Journal* of Lady Warwick, the *Memoirs* of Lady Fanshawe,[2]

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a playwright and after the Restoration figured as a great literary lady. She died in 1673, having compiled a biography of her husband during his lifetime; this appeared in 1667. Ed. by C. H. Firth, 1906.

[1] Anthony Hamilton, of Scottish parentage, spent the greater part of his youth in France, and at the Court of Charles II. found himself again in an atmosphere saturated with French influences. Whatever the part which one can attribute to the Comte de Grammont himself in the story of his adventures, this extremely witty work is one of the most remarkable examples of the perfect assimilation of a foreign language with all its genius, all its finer shades of meaning. Written about 1701, it was published at Cologne in 1713. The English translation appeared in 1714; ed. by Goodwin, 1903. See the study by Ruth Clark, 1921.

[2] Reresby died in 1689; his *Memoirs* were published in 1734; ed. by Ivatt, 1904. Lady Mary Boyle, the sister of Robert Boyle and of the Count of Orrery, married Charles Rich, Earl of Warwick, in 1659; her Diary, which covers the period 1666-72, was published in 1848. Ann Harrison married in 1644 Sir Richard Fanshawe, who was an active agent of the royal cause and Ambassador in Portugal and Spain. He died in 1666; the *Memoirs of Lady Fanshawe*, of great historical interest, appeared in 1829; new edn., 1907.

show the fertility of this kind, to which any artistic intention
often quite foreign. The desire to tell the story of one's
e, or to fix in writing the varied, ever-changing traits of an age
hen the course of things is speedy and rich in incidents, when
e individual throws off the shackles of former constraints, lies
t the root of this fecundity, which, from now onwards, will be
permanent characteristic of literary production. But two
diarists, Evelyn[1] and Pepys,[2] have merited a place apart through
the exceptional value of the substance of their works, and also
through their personalities.

Evelyn is interesting. Historians give great credit to his
precise, detailed narrative, which aims only at exactitude, and
yet will offer notations that go beyond mere facts, opening up
new perspectives. The story of his travels is a mine of informa-
tion about France, Italy, and Holland in the middle of the seven-
teenth century; and the idea that we can form of English life
under the last kings of the Stuart dynasty and William III. owes
much to his pages. His personal choice leads him to observe
natural phenomena, art curiosities, technical works, manorial
residences and their gardens, rather than the motives prompting
human actions or the politics of states; his attention to things
is that of the erudite, enlightened virtuoso, who is more attracted
the secrets of the universe than by those of souls. But his
ery wide experience brings him into contact with many aspect
f society, and there is none upon which he does not shed som
ight.

[1] John Evelyn, born in 1620, came of a wealthy family, travelled on the Co
tinent, served the cause of the King, and after the Restoration filled several pu
offices, becoming an active member of the Royal Society. At Sayes Court with
famous gardens he led the life of a country gentleman of letters, the liberal
tector of art and science. His *Diary*, which only sums up his early memo
assumes the character of a detailed account of events from 1641 onwards, a
continued, on a varying scale, until the year of his death (1706); it was publ
in 1818. Ed. by A. Dobson, 3 vols., 1906. Evelyn himself published num
works, e.g. *Sylva*, 1664. *Miscellaneous Writings*, 1825. See *The Early Lif*
Education of John Evelyn, ed. by Maynard Smith, 1920.

[2] Samuel Pepys, born in 1632, of lower middle-class family, experienced
hardships, pursued an honourable and useful career as an official, connect
the Navy Office, became Secretary of the Navy, and President of the Royal
He died in 1704 after having traversed a series of new trials, the result of
crises. He retained in English history the features of a mere official u
when his *Diary*, written in shorthand, was deciphered and published, reve
most intimate secrets of his whole personality. It covers the first ten yea
Restoration (1660-69); ed. by Wheatley, 8 vols., 1893-96; new edn., 1923
Correspondence, etc., of S. P., ed. by J. R. Tanner, 1925. See R. L.
liar Studies of Men and Books, 1882; studies by P. Lubbock, and E.
1922; G. Bradford, 1924.

Even the moral originality of the Restoration is to be seen through the pages of his medley; away from all the rush of Court and town life alike, he reflects the fever of pleasure without actually taking part in it; and his moral perception is not obtuse; he it is who reveals to us, in a Mrs. Godolphin, one of the most upright and most touching characters of an age when noble figures are rare. For Evelyn, Royalist and orthodox in all his political and religious opinions, has in his temperament the serious disposition, the meditative tendency, of the Puritan. He is, as it were, a brilliant, almost aristocratic example of that bourgeois spirit which is perpetuating the deep-rooted seriousness of the race below the fashionable dissipation of the time, and so forms the link between the austerity of the Civil War period and the moralising attempts of the classical age. The simple, unadorned style of his *Diary* has a relative elegance, and, as it were, a natural correctness; all that is still inorganic in contemporary syntax is here most often redeemed by the lucidity of the thought.

Pepys is a writer of unique interest. In no literature can one find so absolutely sincere a confession; for it was not written with a view to being published, nor even deciphered, and its intention was only to recall the minutest detail of daily life to a personality naïvely fond of preserving and living through it again. It is free from all conscious warping; it does not even offer the unconscious alterations through which the pride of the Romanticist invents or exaggerates the weaknesses and perversities of his own self. Between the mind of Pepys and the hand that pens his thoughts there interposes no moral shame, no self-respect, no desire for self-idealisation; he brings a splendid and perfect objectivity to this record of his life. Thus, we are given the true and complete portrait of a soul; or rather, of what an average soul, that is little anxious to live at a high pitch of concentration, can understand of itself. And as its whole attention is focussed on the outside world, on the field of its daily activity, and the ever-changing setting in which that activity lies, we find in the delectable wealth of these memoirs ten years of the concrete history of England, as seen from a central point by a diligent, assimilating observer, who is enough mixed up with decisive events to have first-hand experience of them, and who, at the same time, keeps sufficiently clear to give us the opinion of the crowd.

The grave, virtuous figure of Mr. Pepys, aureoled in the ected glow of public dignity and pomp, vanishes at the con- t of his own book. Its place is taken by a man who is angely living and real, because he participates in all the little, ogical, incongruous, unavowed weaknesses of that psychological eality which ethics, decency, and social sentiment mitigate or over up on every occasion. No realistic novel will ever, in point of accurate truth, surpass the standard of this involuntary art, even though the active analysis of the novelist will often display greater penetration and a farther reach. The being which thus reveals itself, under the crudest light, is that of a man who, mediocre as he is in some of his features, is quite estimable in others, and who bears well this terribly searching scrutiny. Pepys is an encouraging example of humanity as seen without disguise; his instinctive egoism has nothing harsh about it; he is capable of disinterested feelings; his public zeal goes farther than the mere care of his own career, and at times broadens out into a really national concern. Moreover, this administrative and painstaking citizen, formerly of Puritan leanings, who has become, changing with the times, a luke- warm Anglican, is a lover of music when the mood is upon him, and endeavours to taste the pleasures of the mind; his scientific curiosity, a trifle naive, is untiring; whether it be contemporary literature, and the theatre, or the scandal gossip of the day, the court and the town, the information he supplies is that of a man whose sincere desire has been to understand and to feel.

His record, divided up into short notes jotted down fro day to day, and as desultory as life itself, wields upon o imaginations the spell of an ever-changing, picturesque specta the dramatic quality of which is increased by its document value. Here an epoch revives, and the world of the Restora assumes once again all its actual interest; we see it through eyes of a witness. The narration at times develops to the a tude of great events, and the gossip acquires a touch of di when historic scenes, such as the coronation of Charles II ravages of the plague, the fire of London, spread them out in all their magnitude. In the pages of Pepys the style since there is a man, and one who knows how to o and note typical details, fix them in words exact, vivid, exp ere is a writer, although there is not the slightest trace and holds us as would that of a child gr

sensation, who brought the searching mind of an adult to bear on everything. With very little gift for criticism, he is all the more representative of an age in which the desire for truth is still part and parcel of the thirst for the wonderful.

His language, which is entirely spontaneous, has the slips, the abbreviations, the ready-made and passively repeated forms, of the most familiar conversation with one's self. As slightly constructed as possible, it does not react in any way against the dissolution of the former periodic syntax; and the continual jerks of these notes which run on, then stop to start again, ceaselessly bounding off with a broken, quick movement, strike one as revealing the loosest mental and verbal organisation. And yet there is a certain order in this irregular sequence, the direct order of sensation and the association of ideas; and the story as a whole is clear, almost always limpid and easy to follow, no less than it is lively and impulsive. In the pages of Pepys one can detect, along with a transition in grammar, the trend towards the elements of a new correctness, founded upon the spirit of analysis which is already present and active, but which has not yet succeeded, as with the conscious and artistic writers of prose, in freeing itself from the vast and broken mould, the fragments of which it still drags along with it.

4. *Moral Analysis; the Essay. Cowley, Temple.*—An inner movement carries a literature of critical reasoning to the study of the man within. Psychology—in no way impassioned and intuitive, after the romantic fashion—but analytical, readily deductive, and in every instance preoccupied with the problems of human conduct, is the intellectual activity most proper to classicism, in England as in France. Less pronounced perhaps than in France, for the English temperament is less naturally prone to self-analysis than to the fresh and concrete perception of self, this characteristic, however, is easily recognisable as early as the Restoration period; it will be even more so in the classical age. And, as the English mind regains on the side of practical attention what it loses, when compared with the French, on that of reflective lucidity, English literature, during its rational phase, will be, still more than the French, occupied with public or private morals. After the theologians and preachers, the moralists of all kinds, the political writers, in a

d the philosophers of action and of life, abound during the g stretch of years from Hobbes to Godwin.

The moralists had always been numerous. But the new fact note is that the tone of literature encourages a clear, elegant d pleasant expression of thoughts about man and his fate. What was hitherto marked with the stamp of scholasticism and hurch teaching, and bound up with traditional or orthodox orms, is now included more broadly, easily and unanimously n the common domain of the subjects open to all educated people.

The diffusion of psychological enquiries and theses is the salient feature of the seventeenth century in France. By virtue of a parallel course, and also through the effect of French influence, the same tendency betrays itself in England. All the wealth of moral intuition upon which Elizabethan drama had thriven, all the serious fund of the religious conscience which had fed Puritan controversies, now issue out and are transformed; there is a decline in drama, Puritanism suffers an eclipse; but enlightened, judicious, well-bred authors dissert from now onwards on what was lately the substance of instinctive creations, or of heavily learned treatises.

The essay is the branch of literature best adapted to the free expression of a moralising mind. Towards the beginning of the next century it will be carried by English classicism to a rare degree of finish, and will have the value of an original artistic creation. The essay of the Restoration keeps very clos to the form given it by Montaigne, whose influence, which for moment had waned, is now reviving.[1] The subtle analyses Bacon, invested with a choice, dense, imaginative style, ha less of a following than the more simply human words of author of the *Essais*. Cowley,[2] a writer of the preceding g eration, survives the Restoration by several years; at his de he leaves eleven short familiar talks on moral subjects, i spersed with verse, strewn with anecdotes, and of a remark easy movement, where the manner of Montaigne is allied a personal touch. Here, the note of the new literatu

[1] A new translation of Montaigne's work was to be published by Charle in 1685.

[2] Abraham Cowley, 1618-67 (see Part I). *Several Discourses, by Essays, in Verse and Prose*, appeared in 1668. *English Writings*, ed by *Poems, etc.*; ed. by Gough, 1915; ed. by Lumby and Tilley, 1923

incontestably dominant; erudition, classical reminiscences, and even the liberty of a temperament which gives itself vent, are all unified and enveloped by the charm of a style which has the intuition of measure and order. It is again Montaigne whom one finds in the work of George Savile, Earl of Halifax, who, through his affinities, belongs rather to the following generation.[1] Montaigne's influence is also perceptible in the pages of Temple,[2] who would have been the best essayist of the Restoration, had not Dryden written his critical prefaces and essays.

The essays of Temple are works of estimable merit. Without the erudition of the scholar, he writes history from the point of view of a layman; his *Essay on Ancient and Modern Learning* cannot be defended; but he was able to see the realities of contemporary life, and his political judgments have a certain vigour. In the domain of things moral, he brings the gift of a clear-sighted and calm reflectiveness, without illusion or bitterness; less good-natured than Montaigne, and less forceful than Swift, he sometimes recalls the one, sometimes the other. His maxims have often a happy finesse. Classical in his tastes, and a supporter of the Ancients against the Moderns, he speaks very freely on the question of rules, viewing them in the light of quite negative assurances against the worst errors of art. His thought is none the less of the most purely rational quality, with that practical bent, that attention to health, comfort, and the happiness that can accrue from the little pleasures of life, which are characteristically English, and in which the Epicurean wisdom of Montaigne is given a more utilitarian cast.[3]

But these moderate merits are brought into stronger relief by the character of easy balance and supple spontaneity, in which the man and the writer equally share. With Temple, the rationalism of the Restoration appears, as it were, really incorporated with the moral person; it is one with the instinct itself

[1] See below, chap. vii. sect. 3.

[2] Sir William Temple, born in 1628, played a part during the Restoration as a foreign agent, then as a politician; died in retirement (1699). He left behind a fairly extensive work, a part of which was published by Swift and comprises principally, in addition to the essays themselves (*Miscellanea*, 1680, 1690, 1701), political and historical studies (*Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands; Essay upon the Origin and Nature of Government; An Introduction to the History of England*, 1685; etc.). *Works*, 4 vols., 1814. *Essays on Ancient and Modern Learning, and on Poetry*, ed. by Spingarn, 1909. See the biography, etc., by Courtenay, 1836; studies by Beavan, Lyttel, 1908.

[3] Essays on *Gout, Health, Gardening*, etc.

nature that finds therein, and without effort, the assured king of sensibility as of intelligence. Practised in this easy , the new spirit in literature is no longer a fashion, nor an gressive attitude which still savours of a reaction; it has come a normal temperament. In a sense Temple is the first the English classicists; and his clear-cut style, unencumbered, mple, smooth but still compact, symmetrical and yet free from onotony, has almost always the rhythm and finish of the best nodern prose.

5. *Restoration Prose.*—An epoch of honourable fecundity, but one in which the summits of art are seldom reached, the Restoration can claim that it prepared the instruments which literature will employ from now onwards. The "heroic" or rhymed couplet, with its cadence, its pauses, the epigrammatic or didactic tone which is proper to it, and the range of its possible effects—a range more extensive, in fact, than that which Pope will use—has been carried by Dryden, after Waller and Denham, right to the state of final elaboration where one can say that a new mould of poetry has been evolved. Admirably adapted to verse of a reasoning, cold nature, this mould is a consequence, in a much broader sense than it will be a cause; the inspiration which has created it will make its lasting fortune, until the day when a new inspiration will demand to have it recast.

The creation of a modern style is a less brilliant realisation, perhaps, but will prove to be more durable. While prose ca be animated by the highest poetic sentiment, and while Roma ticism will revivify English prose, there are scales of calm an relatively simple effects which the literature of average ambiti can never renounce, because it is in them that it has most oft to move; for these, it is indispensable to command a clear, e diction, one that adapts itself without effort to the idea, that pleases without straining too much after beauty. To f such a tool will not only mean to realise a progress. A instrument of art, the prose of the last Elizabethans, of a Je Taylor, for example, had resources which that of an a reason will no longer possess. But it is in the plane of i gence and common sense that the great mass of ordinary w naturally find their place; and the possibility given to thes f procuring a moderate pleasure, without undue stra

permanent conquest, of which the English language has not yet lost the heritage. Time can hardly be said to have left its mark upon the best essays of the Restoration; they read to-day as if they had been written yesterday. The books of the preceding generation, on the other hand, are already clouded over by a mist of archaism.

Among the creators of modern prose, as of classical verse, Dryden must be placed in the front rank; and, indeed, the same deep requirements of thought produce at the same time these two literary forms. It is the spirit of analysis which is at the source of the one and of the other; or more exactly, it is a general demand for easy intelligibility, of which analysis is at once an immediate consequence and a privileged instrument. In order that there should be clearness, each element of style, the matter offered for each successive act of mental perception, must be short, and easily encompassed by the mind; so that for the sake of economy of effort the long period, just as the huge poetic paragraph, is condemned. The brief sentence, like the rhymed couplet, becomes the normal type of expression.

Within the sentence, as within the couplet, there must reign an order that is grasped at first sight; and the relationship of words, as of ideas, must be strongly marked by a firm construction, for elegance and even beauty proceed, above all, from the transparency of the verbal arrangement, and from its perfect coincidence with the pattern of the thought. In poetry, where greater condensation is necessary, where expression has to be chosen and striking, this balance tends to organise itself around fixed relations of weight and mass, of which antithesis is the model. Prose remains more supple, and preserves a relative liberty of movement within the limits of a definite and settled form. Finally, the sentences, like the couplets, link up the one with the other into developments, according to natural and logical progressions, created by the action of a mind that is master of itself, and that passes from one object to another with the full consciousness of whence it comes and whither it is going.

Still animated by an imaginative and romantic ardour, the poetry of Dryden does not realise this ideal in its purity, or rather, it introduces therein artistic suggestions which are foreign, strictly speaking, to the standard it has set up. His

se is much closer to the perfect and stripped simplicity in ich the literature of didactic exposition is henceforth to find uniform type. The essays and prefaces of Dryden are often ritten with an absolute propriety of terms, joined to a sovereign ase, and move, in their smaller constituent parts, with an nfallible sureness. It is in the building up of the whole work hat this art is still at fault; it is not yet free from digressions and incertitudes; it has not lost all its fanciful spontaneousness. But it is, none the less, an art that is almost complete, and the example of a literary tradition that is being created at this time never to be broken. The same characteristics appear in the best of the contemporary writers; and Sir William Temple is not inferior to Dryden.

On the one, as on the other, French prose has exercised an undeniable influence. The many translations of French works, the care with which Dryden and Temple have read French critics, their knowledge of the French language, enable one to discern the occasions and channels through which this influence did exert itself. But it seems possible to affirm that it was not the sufficing and decisive cause of a progress which the very quality of an age of Reason irresistibly demanded. A time when science passes into the foreground, when religion grows entirely rational, when the easily intelligible intercourse of minds in social life becomes the aim and law of literature, could not but tend to be an epoch of facile and regulated verbal communication; it was to aim a fashioning a prose both balanced and clear. The Restoratio has not been exclusively prosaic; it has its brilliance, a kind radiating glow, in which there still plays a last glimmer of t Renascence; but, if one considers the future, it is in the doma of prose that this period has realised its most lasting creati

To be consulted: *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol vii chap :ii xv; vol. viii chap i. x xii. xv. xvi.; C. S Duncan, *The New Science English Literature in the Classical Period*, 1913; Joseph Glanvill, *Plus Ult the Progress and Advancement of Knowledge*, 1668, Gosse, *History of Eigh Century Literature*, 1889; Hutton, *The English Church from the Accessi Charles I. to the Death of Anne*, 1903; R. F. Jones, *The Background of the of the Books*, 1920 (in Washington University Studies); Overton, *Life in th lish Church, 1660-1714*, 1885; de Rémusat, *Histoire de la Philosophie en Ang de Bacon à Locke*, 1875; Nichol Smith, *Characters from the Histories and M of the Seventeenth Century*, 1918; J. E. Spingarn, *Critical Essays of the Sev Century*, 1908-9; Walker, *The English Essay*, etc., 1915.

CHAPTER VI

THE DISSIDENT WRITERS

The Elements of Psychological Dissidence; Idealism.—
terary tone of the Restoration is of a uniformity rare in odern history of England. Paramount social forces, the dence of the inner rhythm and of circumstances, restrained iterature of this epoch to the relative sovereignty of a ue characteristic. Such simplicity, which in itself would not a sign of wealth, is here anything but absolute. The ective life of a national spirit is never subjected to a perfect vergence. Already, in order to fit in this period to a logical ame, one must exclude the last works of Milton, which stand t like a glorious contradiction in the very centre of a hostile ge.

This real complexity of temperament is not only to be found n the great belated Puritans. As soon as the facts are closely examined, almost all the writers and their works reveal, by the side of their dominant tendencies, other tendencies of a secondary nature; divergences of thought, of sensibility, and of taste, dissonant qualities as it were, which refuse to be harmonised with the moral tone of the period.

These elements of irreducible variety are, now, feeble but permanent features; now, momentary revivings, sudden accidental reappearances, and in this case their character has often a brilliant intensity. The preceding chapters have shown a fairly considerable number of moral or artistic moods that jar with the general tonality of the epoch. Lyrical poetry and the drama, in particular, offer a rather strong proportion.

These reserves do not impair the definition of the period. It is not by virtue of what it retains of lyrical inspiration or of deep and moving appeal, that the figure of the Restoration is recognisable among the ages.

As there are exceptional moods scattered throughout th whole range of literature, so there are writers who in themselv are exceptions. Among the contemporaries of Dryden are

found several authors who cannot be classed chronologically ong the survivors of the preceding age, and yet through their oral nature live wholly in harmony with it. They raise to the atus of art the natural expression of a fund of sentiment that mly subsists in many souls, especially among the popular asses. Puritanism does not disappear with the advent of the Restoration. Relegated to the background, jeered at, and in its urn persecuted, the austerely mystic and personal religion seeks refuge in obscurity and silence. The social atmosphere of the time is hostile to it; it has hardly any followers left among the influential classes of the day; literature, which it lately wanted to rein in and lead, now casts opprobrium upon it; by the common will of writers and readers alike, the art of writing is denied it.

But a deep belief cannot remain silent for long; the spirit of the dissenting sects makes itself heard indirectly, under shelter of the obscurity which enfolds them; and its accents, when they attain intensity of character and beauty, seek to veil this intrepidity under the humble guise of pious treatises, allegories, memoirs, which an edifying intention alone would appear to have dictated.

Can Bunyan, Fox, Ellwood be regarded as late-comers? They could equally well be described as precursors. They form the connecting link between the past and the future. They reveal the persistence of a psychological temperament, the gradual awakening of which, during the following century, will open the way to a renovation in literature.

It is in the work of these three writers that one must perceive and study this temperament, at an epoch when a reaction towards intellectuality is sweeping irresistibly over the more cultured part of the nation. The more distinguished symptoms so to say, that one can discover among churchmen and universit people, are at once less pronounced and less representative. Th "Platonicians" of Cambridge maintain a brilliant focus, but or that is decidedly local, of idealistic thought, the radiation which scarcely penetrates beyond the circles of practised thinke Henry More,[1] and Cudworth,[2] at first Cartesians (see chapt

[1] Henry More, 1614-87, published in 1647, a philosophical poem, *The Song* *the Soul*; under the Restoration appeared the *Grand Mystery of Godliness* (16 and *Divine Dialogues* (1668), in which he tries his hand at an interpretation the Revelation; etc.

[2] Ralph Cudworth, 1617-88, is chiefly remembered on account of *The*

v.), react against the philosophy of reason, whose trend towards scepticism is making them more and more apprehensive. Not only do they affirm the immortality of the soul, but they nourish a rich and poetic feeling of its activity and destiny, that links them up with Plotinus. Cudworth is still a theorist of spiritualism; More is a fervent idealist, almost a visionary. But these thinkers have only been given their true place in the eyes of a distant posterity; and their influence has never been wide. On the contrary, the popular and at first hidden action of Bunyan from an early hour reaches a widespread class of readers; in the eighteenth century it emerges, to rank among the most fruitful spiritual forces of English literature.

2. *Bunyan.*—Bunyan [1] is only some few years younger than Marvell. If his work has to be connected with the Restoration, which officially ignores it, it is because it belongs almost entirely to this period. Besides, it bears the marks of persecution; it is animated by a violent ardour which imprisonment, inward meditation, despair of the present, all drive to the future, to dreams and symbols, to the compensatory revenge of impassioned fancy.

No other writer has been shaped under such humble circumstances as Bunyan. He knew nothing of university culture; one can say that his mind was moulded by a single book, the Bible. The power of his imagination was nurtured by the Scriptures, which he realised and lived through by the intensity of his fervour. The moving force of his spiritual dramas springs

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Intellectual System of the Universe, 1678, where he reviews the various objections to orthodox belief, in a spirit of remarkable fairness.

[1] John Bunyan, born in 1628, in Bedfordshire, was the son of an artisan, received a very scant education, served in the Republican army; after certain moral crises in which he was tormented by the anguish of sin, he found comparative solace in the faith of a Baptist sect where he exercised the functions of preacher, and battled against the Quakers. On the Restoration he was imprisoned and, refusing to submit, remained a prisoner for twelve years. Liberated in 1672, he became pastor of his little church, then after three years was again thrown into prison for six months, and while thus in captivity wrote the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1676). His last years were those of an active and ardent apostle and writer. He died on the eve of the Revolution (Aug., 1688). The first work in which is revealed the quality of his imagination is *Grace Abounding*, 1666. *The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to That which is to Come*, published in two parts (1678 and '84); *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, 1680; *The Holy War*, 1682, represent the heights of his literary endeavours, which were manifold. Ed. by J. Brown, Cambridge. See the biographies by Southey, 1830; Venables, 1888; studies by Froude: *Bunyan* (English Men of Letters), 1880; J. Brown: *Bunyan, His Life, Time and Works*, 1887; J. B. Wharey: *A Study of the Sources of Bunyan's Allegories, with Especial Reference to Deguileville's Pilgrimage of Man*, 1904; G. O. Griffith, *John Bunyan*, 1927.

To the Constables of Bedford and to every of them

Whereas information and complaint is made unto us that (notwithstanding the Kings Maj^ts late Act of most gracious generall and free pardon to all his Subjects for past misdemeanours that by his said clemencie and indulgent grace and favour they might bee mooved and induced for the time to come more carefully to observe his Highnesse lawes and Statutes and to continue in theire loyall and due obedience to his Ma^ty) yett one John Bunnyon of your said Towne Tynker hath divers times within one Month last past in contempt of his Ma^ty good Lawes preached or teached at a Conventicle meeteing or assembly under colour or pretence of exercise of Religion in other manner then according to the Liturgie or Practise of the Church of England These are therefore in his Ma^ty name to comand you forthwith to apprehend and bring the Body of the said John Bunnion before us or any of us or other his Ma^ty Justice of peace within the said County to answer the premisses and further to doe and receave as to Lawe and Justice shall appertaine and hereof you are not to faile Given under our handes and Seales this fowerth Day of March in the Seaven and twentieth yeare of the Reigne of our most gracious Soveraigne Lord King Charles the Second A^o Dni 1674

Warrant under which Bunyan was apprehended and imprisoned for six months, during which he wrote "The Pilgrim's Progress." From original in the Pierpont Morgan Library

tly from a conscience in which the destiny of the soul was inually working itself out. Bunyan only listened to his secret es, and only related his own story. Proceeding thus from most common and most accessible sources of religion, his rary genius does not require to be explained through reminis-ces or secret borrowings.

Much labour has been expended in estimating his debt to his imerous predecessors. The central theme of *The Pilgrim's rogress* has nothing original in it; it is a symbol as old as maginative piety; and in his development of the story Bunyan follows the very lines of earlier allegories, among which the best known is *The Pilgrimage of Man*, by Deguileville. Probably no one will ever know to what extent his invention has been stimulated or guided by these suggestions, which were already familiar to the popular mind. He himself presents his book as the fruit of inspiration; thus it appeared to him, and it is probably wisest to view it thus.

The work of Bunyan is, so to say, a lay Bible, stripped of all that is not, to a Puritan conscience, the direct teaching of salvation; and as this teaching, for a simple and naive mind, can only take the concrete form of an experience, each of his great works gives the story of the supreme experience in which is summed up every soul's life, of the decisive choice that it must make between God and the Devil. In *Grace Abounding* we have the history of a conversion in its most immediate form, that of a personal confession. No autobiography has a keener psychological interest. Aided by the strength of his inner perception, and by a dramatic sense of the struggles which are usually obscured in the dim light of the subconscious self, Bunyan, relating his own experience, has described with incomparable force the stages which lead a man marked out for faith from the conviction of sin, through despair, temptations, an fights, to final peace and blessedness. With a striking realis is imagination throws into relief the actors of this mystic tal and here the gift of vision can no longer be distinguished fro hallucination. A moving sincerity emanates from these pag where the moral and organic base of individual relig in its exalted form is reached with sure and unsurpas audacity.

r parts of his work, Bunyan raises a degree hi

this implicit generalisation, this application of his own life's destiny to others, which is the motive power of *Grace Abounding;* and so the story of a soul becomes properly allegorical. *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* teaches through example, and like tragedy, through a catastrophe. *The Pilgrim's Progress* shows the way to the Eternal City. Calmer in tone, less strained, capable at moments of a smile, the dramatisation of inner experience here attains a richer and higher value. In following the heroes of Bunyan through the many vicissitudes of their journey towards the dream of their hearts, one understands the attraction that lies in this symbolical and puerilely deep tale, and how it has held millions of readers to whom it has presented the very picture of their most essential existence, of their incomparably strongest fears and hopes. A naïve ingenuity invests with a tangible appearance, either concrete or personified, the snares of the flesh and those of the mind, the help received from above, the perils, the backslidings, the mortal anxieties which beset the soul in its quest after salvation. The austere doctrine of a jealous God, of a path strewn with pitfalls, of the scarcity of the chosen, is illustrated with the enthusiastic fullness of a faith that knows and that sees; and the sombre pathos of Puritan Christianity has here realised its powers with unequalled amplitude and clearness.

Allegories such as these are masterpieces; but one hesitates in pronouncing, when they are concerned, the words "art" or "genius," because their greatness and beauty are wholly impersonal. Supremely eloquent by virtue of his objectivity, Bunyan has been the faithful mouthpiece of the religious conscience of a people. The sublimity of his work is that which lies in the highest torments of a human life excruciated by the torturing uncertainty of its moral future; he has been able to convey, to actualise this sublimity, but one feels that it transcends his very being, his intelligence, his real intent. Never has the inspiration of a creator been at bottom more collective. And this creator must not be denied the merit of having allowed to pass within him, without breaking, adulterating or defiling it, the torrent of the emotions and images which were stirring up so many less conscious personalities in a more obscure way around him. But the poet and the seer, in Bunyan, are but the supreme power of a spiritual exaltation, with which the humblest forms of what may

rmed Puritan literature are almost always illuminated and ted.

As a writer, Bunyan has a natural gift that is undeniable; feels and perceives with the greatest keenness; he knows how express what he perceives; he knows how to tell a tale, to k up the incidents in a drama; his style, racy and full of sap, s nevertheless ease, lucidity, order, a sense of construction ite unexpected in one of so little culture. But this keen force f perception is what comes to a believer from the stimulation f psychological life by faith; this skill in dramatic effect is the direct influence of the powerful hold which an obsessing vision has over the mind it sways; the qualities of this language are none other than those of the English Bible of 1611, which has been absorbed, as it were, and has become the spontaneous dialect of thought. Bunyan writes with the Bible, no doubt transposing it, and reducing it to a more familiar tone, but losing nothing of the range of its nobleness. And the sure movement of his prose is due to the firm, sober pattern, to the directness, the architecture of the sacred writings. Through the communion of faith, Bunyan has risen to an equal footing with the scholarly translators of the Scriptures.

3. *Fox, Ellwood.*—That there is also in this literary worth a rare felicity of temperament, cannot be denied as soon as one compares *The Pilgrim's Progress* with the works of other contemporary mystics Among the sects who succeed in traversing the moral desert of the Restoration, often at the cost of cruel suffering, that of the Quakers is perhaps the most noteworthy. It comes into existence at the height of the Civil War, and gives English Puritanism its freest, boldest, and also most logica expression; it really bases belief on the contact alone of th Divine intuitively known. Not only is the authority of th Church thus ruined, but further, in a large measure, that the Bible is weakened. Better than the pastors of to-day, or t ancient prophets, the "inner light" brings revelation to ev soul. Entering into conflicts with orthodoxy and with the extreme dissenters; threatened from within by the extravaga of the "Ranters," in whom the visionary zeal produces effect much opposed to the outward signs of Grace; denounced, be imprisoned, at times put to death, the Quakers survive, th that force of resistance which is often called into being b

secution; they colonise whole districts in America, and in England, after their stormy beginnings, found a kind of religious race apart, which has its own language, costume and laws.

The numerous writings in which these men defend themselves, tell their own story, and spread their faith, are of the most vivid interest to the historian of ideas and sentiments. On this account, literary history cannot neglect them. But the spark of beauty which often glows in these works fails to dissipate the darkness of confused thoughts and of an entangled style.

The writers themselves, however, dominate the works, and by the force, almost always by the strange gentleness also of their personalities, they preserve a living appeal to us. Of all this multiple production, the writings which still bear being read by others than specialists or devotees are those wherein we find revealed the moral figures of George Fox[1] and Thomas Ellwood.[2] With the latter, of middle-class birth and rather advanced culture, the enthusiasm is tempered by a simple humanity, and his story, which throws an intimate and familiar light upon the religious struggles of the Restoration, has the taking charm of a true sensibility, all mingled with a resolution not to be conquered. But neither Fox, nor even Ellwood, writes like Bunyan; their style, in comparison with his, shows the obvious traces of an inorganic syntax, of a language in transition, and in one word, the stamp of this time, above which Bunyan rises through the unique concentration of his visionary power.

To be consulted: Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 1912; *Cambridge istory of English Literature*, vol. vii. chap. vii., vol. viii. chaps. iv. and xi.; Clark, *History of English Nonconformity*, vol. ii., 1913; Dowden, *Puritan and Anglican*, 1900; Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, 1899; R. M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, 1909; C. A. Moore, *John Dunton, Pietist and Impostor* (Studies in Philology, October 1925); Tulloch, *English Puritanism and its Leaders*, 1861.

[1] George Fox, 1624-90, the founder of the sect, whose scholarship was little better than that of Bunyan, dictated a *Diary*, which Ellwood, his disciple, corrected and published in 1694. The early text was published by the Cambridge University Press, ed. by Penney, etc., 1911; revised text, ed. by Penney, 1925. See the study by R. Knight (*The Founder of Quakerism*, etc.), 1922; by Hodgkin, 1896; Jones, 1904; Stähelin, 1908.

[2] *The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood, written by his own hand*, was published in 1714; ed. by Henry Morley, Universal Library, 1886.

is fifty-six years old; but as yet he has scarcely published anything. The Revolution realises his hopes, and enables him to give full expression to his ideas. From every point of view, he must be looked upon as the representative of the age when constitutional liberty and tolerance take definite shape.

The system of Hobbes is an extreme, almost exceptional form of English thought; that of Locke is an average form of it, broadly founded upon the instincts and desires of practical men; who are prepared to find complexities in truth, and anxious to adapt themselves flexibly to what exists. It is a preliminary motive of prudence and wisdom that is at the source of his *Essay on Understanding;* before dogmatically solving thorny problems, and pitting doctrine against doctrine, we must assure ourselves as to what man is able to know; the critical attitude of mind here springs from an experimental good sense. It is a genuinely English tendency, also, which shows itself in the negation of any innate idea, if not of any innate activity of consciousness. The world is built up of the work of reflection upon the simple data of perception; and all the adventurous and often verbal wranglings of a scholastic philosophy vanish before the cold, clear light of a notion of mental life which modern psychology has singularly outdistanced, but the realism of which at that epoch was fruitful. General concepts originate in the operation of thought on the particular; and essential certitudes are founded: our "ego," by a direct intuitional feeling; the existence of God, by a rational demonstration; that of nature, by the repeated perception of its sensible characteristics.

In this, no doubt, we have only a relativist theory of knowledge; if geometry, that ideal science, which is a product of the mind itself, retains all its solidity, the science of nature is no longer anything else than a probable linking-up of empirical observations. Such a conclusion was a discomfort to traditional philosophy, and almost an avowal of impotence. But Locke is not in the least perturbed by it. The probability of natural sequences is sufficient for our intellectual desires, since it suffices for our needs; the normal use of our faculties is to employ them

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cation, ed. by Quick, 1880. See T. Fowler, *Locke* (English Men of Letters), 1880; Ch. Bastide, *J. Locke, ses théories politiques et leur influence en Angleterre*, 1907; studies by Fraser, 1890, Alexander, 1906; Hefelbower (*Relation of John Locke to English Deism*), 1919; S. T. Lamprecht (*Moral and Political Philosophy of John Locke*), 1921.

for the preservation and conduct of our lives. If knowledge is necessary, it is with a view to action.

The rest of Locke's doctrine is a series of practical applications of empiricism. His political theory, like that of Hobbes, admits a primitive state of nature and a social contract; but instead of simplifying these notions and developing their logical consequences to the farthest possible limit, Locke turns to the observation of facts—contemporary facts—and here he discovers another "nature." Individuals are born free; they are subject to one law, that of moral behaviour. As this law is not always respected, the citizens of the same state delegate the judicial powers to certain representatives; this delegation, limited and revocable, implies reciprocal obligation; and government is but a public service. The spirit of the English Constitution could not be more accurately defined. As for property, it is founded, at least originally, upon labour. The economic theory of Locke is liberal, and sees the sources of English prosperity in commerce.

In theology, there is the same tranquil respect shown to facts —to these facts, the Scriptures and the moral needs of conscience. Questioned by a reasoning mind, which wants to find rules and motives of action, the Bible teaches a quite reasonable Christianity. In this atmosphere of lucid, calm belief, how could tolerance not be born? Experience shows us the varied nature of sects; religion is a purely personal matter; a church is a free grouping of believers; let all the churches therefore be given their liberty, with one reserve, the security of the State. The law will only intervene to ensure the observance of the social act. The Roman Catholic and the atheist, according to Locke, thus find themselves, through their own fault, debarred from tolerance. . . . Finally, his pedagogy emphasises the practical virtues of education, as a formative agent of character; prefers the tuition of life to that of the Universities; protests against the traditional exercises of the schools; and finds the best instrument of culture in the child's maternal language.

We have here no longer the intoxication of reason, the biting criticism of a Butler, or the ardent logic of a Hobbes; but a rationalism incorporated with the temperament itself, sobered, and interwoven with the exigencies of life. It is the properly English form of rationalism; and one feels that by virtue of its

calm easy adaptability, it has no longer any of that flexity of principle, of that impassioned single-mindedness in the search for a systematic theory of the world, without both of which, in fact, there can be no pure rationalism. What Locke establishes is the original tradition of English philosophical empiricism; much more plainly than Bacon, he expresses the intellectual requirements of a people for whom the success of knowledge is the proof and substance itself of truth. It is not only among the utilitarians but among the pragmatists of to-day that one must look for the direct posterity of Locke.

A thinker of this temperament does not bring any art into the expression of his thought. The *Essay on Understanding* is of a somewhat monotonous simplicity; in other parts of his work, the style does not lack animation nor even vigour; but on the whole, Locke is not a writer. However, he has definitively brought within the reach of the educated public problems which had till then been inaccessible. As others with morality, he has popularised psychology, and some aspects, at least, of metaphysics.

3. *Halifax and Opportunism.*—The same wisdom, practical, concrete, and so remarkably modern, constitutes the originality of Halifax[1] among the moralists and political writers.

An aristocrat, statesman, and man of the world, he possesses a wide and penetrating experience of life; he interprets it in a style of compact brevity, rich in implicit meaning, which recalls La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère. But instead of a strained, brilliant style, whose aim is effect, we find in his work more simplicity, a veiled irony, a calmer and franker acceptance of the hundred and one petty human mediocrities. His moral pessimism, as cruel at bottom as that of Swift, is all contained and palliated by the tolerance of resignation. His attitude is

[1] George Savile, born in 1633, in Yorkshire, entered *Parliament* on the Restoration, served the Royal cause against Shaftesbury, and was created Viscount Halifax; he afforded the example and outlined the theory of political opportunism during the crises which succeeded one another from 1680 to 1688. He took part [illegible] An orator of [illegible] *sense (Char-* [illegible]

that of a man who wants to live and let live, without illusions, but without bitterness; and who instinctively seeks all that protects, sweetens, and safeguards the frail life of the individual or of the State—tranquil affections, reciprocal indulgence, a wise mean in everything, the respect of order. This philosophy is not the most noble, nor is it the most fruitful; but it is indeed the most natural to the social genius of the English people; and Halifax is a writer of a high representative value. His thought is too fine, his language too reserved, to permit of his being really popular; but his *Advice to a Daughter* was read throughout the eighteenth century; his *Character of a Trimmer* defined for the general public the doctrine of compromise upon which the Revolution of 1688 was about to take its stand. Reasonable, but not dry, bold without cynicism, he judges the problems of religion, like those of private conduct or of government, in a spirit of supple realism which is decidedly the special character of the closing years of the century.

4. *Comedy: Congreve, Vanbrugh, Farquhar; Collier's Criticism.*—This character Restoration comedy could easily make its own; had it not established itself deliberately in the plane of realism? But the atmosphere has changed; and the brilliant talents which reveal themselves in the theatre after 1688 no longer ring with quite the same note as those of Wycherley and Shadwell.

The difference is at times slight; it is not, either, equally perceptible everywhere. Generally speaking, the plays of Congreve, Vanbrugh and Farquhar show the persistence of a literary tone, by the force alone of an acquired habit, while the social realities that justified it have begun to change. These plays none the less, and in the strictest sense, belong to their time. Each author expresses in his own way the spirit of the transitional period.

In the case of Congreve,[1] the connection is rather subtle to

[1] William Congreve, born in 1670, near Leeds, came of an old-established family; prided himself on being at all times a man of the world and not a writer by profession; passed a part of his youth in Ireland, studied law in London, and at the age of 23 obtained a very great success with his first comedy, *The Old Bachelor* (1693). The plays which followed (*The Double Dealer*, 1693; *Love for Love*, 1695) added to his reputation; a tragedy (*The Mourning Bride*, 1697) did not lessen his fame. In 1700 his comedy *The Way of the World* was received coldly, and Congreve, at thirty, abandoned the theatre. Henceforth, he only indulged his talent in verse, and until his death in 1729, led a full and happy life, surrounded by his friends and enjoying a government pension. *Dramatic Works*,

establish. His refined fancy starts with realism, outgrows it, and gives itself full scope in a domain of pure intellectual imagination. Irony, wit, an insolent verve, are all elements with which the Restoration had been familiar. But here they are combined, harmonised, through the virtue of a superior temperament of a writer and artist; the product of their fusion has a purity of matter, a delicacy of form, unknown to the Restoration. One feels that elegant raillery has now been bred in; that a new generation has risen which has this inborn gift, and carries it to perfection by means of conscious culture. One also feels that certain themes are worn out, and that comedy, from the pure and simple satire of manners, can now rise to their satirical idealisation.

However interesting the first plays of Congreve may be, they form, each with its special traits, an artistic progression, leading up to one, the failure of which abruptly checked the career of a fastidious writer, but which is the masterpiece of his style, and of modern English comedy: *The Way of the World.* Here one must look, in a brief study such as this, for the features of an original art, of which only Etherege had given a sketch worthy to be compared with it.

A plot carefully contrived, but not too obviously artificial; contrasted effects, a repressed vigour which bursts out in certain realistic traits; moments of comic liveliness, and farcical scenes: such are the elements of variety which save the play from too constant a distinction, from too dry a preciosity. In this solid framework, which offers nothing exceptional, psychological raillery and dialogue give themselves scope with incomparable brilliance. Congreve's heroes are animated by a greatness which is above circumstance, which seems to be its own end, to raise life higher than itself, and to carry the painting of character on to the plane of a poetic and charming creation. There is here, with a personal touch, with an accent of cynical impertinence in which one catches the ring of the epoch, a rapture of imagination recalling the early comedies of Shakespeare; at the same

ed. by A. C. Ewald (Mermaid Series); ed. by G. Street (Henley's English Classics), 1895; *Complete Works*, 4 vols., ed. by M. Summers, 1923; *Comedies*, ed. by B. Dobrée, 1925. *Incognita*, a short novel written in the youth of Congreve, was republished by Brett-Smith, 1923. See Ed. Gosse, *William Congreve*, 1888, new edition, 1924; G. Meredith, *An Essay on Comedy, etc.*, 1897; study by D. Protopopesco (*Un Classique Moderne, W. Congreve*), 1924; B. Dobree, *Restoration Comedy*, 1924.

time idealised and strikingly true to life, Millamant and Mirabell are the decisive types of a passion which, welling up from the heart, intoxicates the brain with its light vapours, and excites the intellect without depriving it of its self-command. The exact and restrained skill of a master tones down the radiance of these figures, who come very near to the realm of romantic fancy, without actually entering it. At times the sparkle of the dialogue reminds one not only of Shakespeare, but of Marivaux, when in its finesse it sets about analysing sentiment; still, it is of a less highly quintessential turn than that of the French writer, and less uniformly busied with shades of meaning; it revels rather in impertinent sallies and witty diversions, aided by a wonderful gift for repartee and neat phrasing.

However intellectual, in fact, it may be at its source, the art of Congreve would not show its full power, were it not for the exceptional felicity of a language in which, to tell the truth, nothing is left to chance. Behind that elegant exactness, that perfect propriety, that easy tone, that balanced and firm rhythm, very scrupulous care is bestowed upon details. No English writer has better possessed the natural art of making witty people speak, of lending to the most idle of their remarks the piquant touch of the unexpected; but here nature is enhanced by the most artistic desire to give each word its proper value, by the sense of its connection with its fellows, and of the general harmony in which it plays its part. Congreve's prose is the finest and the most brilliant of the age of classicism.

Capable of imbuing characters with life, a master of dialogue and style, has Congreve added to our knowledge of man? In this perhaps lies the weak point of an author who by virtue of several merits is equal to the greatest. But if the nonchalance of his temperament, and the lightness of his art, do not allow his comedy to penetrate very deeply into the study of the human heart, it probes very far below the surface. Without having the value of revelations, the analyses he gives us of the feminine soul, and of a certain conscious and seductive coquetry, are of a very precious quality. And from all his art there emanates, like a discreet suggestion, a softened and almost indulgent pessimism. With much less brutality, Congreve is more of the true cynic than Wycherley; in his more sober tints is depicted a deeper vice, which sinks to the very conscience, and snaps the spring of

all moral indignation. The only virtue which is held up to us—and it is perhaps in itself a sufficient antidote—is sincerity.

Shocked by this indifference to orthodox rules, the taste of posterity has been somewhat severe on Congreve; and Lamb, in order to save him from the common jurisdiction, has had to plead that his fancy is innocuous, because it creates in the realm of unreality.

The contemporaries of Congreve had not the intuition of this paradox, which conceals a truth. In his last play, he had to struggle against a revolt of the demands of morality—a reaction which in their entire careers Vanbrugh and Farquhar had to reckon with.

Ten years after the Revolution, a cleric, Jeremy Collier,[1] published an indictment against the "profaneness and immorality of the English stage." Already the [illegible] feelin[illegible] in va[illegible] authorised; the Church was rising in arms against the theatre, to defend not only morality, but further, and especially, religion and the clergy, which comedy had often placed in a compromising light. The work of Collier has nothing of the nature of a popular argument, simple and naïve; it is a regular denunciation, scholarly and pedantic, and based—only Aristophanes being excepted—on the example of the Ancients, as on that of the French. Shakespeare, Dryden, Wycherley, d'Urfey, and most often Congreve and Vanbrugh, are taken to task. The sermon has weight, and Collier knows how to marshal his arguments; the intentional vehemence of his language avoids, generally speaking, the faults with which he reproaches his adversaries; but it is a sermon, and reveals a singular æsthetic incomprehension. The fundamental identity of art and morality is affirmed with a dogmatism that suppresses all problems, by forcing upon art very explicit moral ends. The reasons for the favour with which the painting of vice could have been received among a large part of the public, are not sought out. The hidden link which connects this diatribe, justified in many respects, but superficial and summary, with the feeling which the middle classes have of their growing influence, is seen in the satirical remarks

[1] 1650-1726. *A Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage*, 1698. See study by Ballein, 1910

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which Collier passes upon the "fine gentleman"; in his defence of the "rich citizens" against the gibes of the writers of comedy. . . .

The lists were now open. The authors involved did not refuse the challenge. They defended themselves by direct replies, and allusions in their prologues, epilogues and prefaces; Dryden, alone, confessed his faults, without, however, renouncing his principles. The history of this controversy cannot be summed up here. Its immediate influence has been, upon the whole, exaggerated. The tone of the English theatre shows no very appreciable change after the pamphlet of Collier; it will alter by degrees, and not by a unanimous movement, but along several lines; and the liberty of the stage will reassert itself more than once. But apart from the immediate object in view, and when studied in the light of the evolution of manners, these pages assume an historical value. They encouraged the rallying of ordinary opinion to the necessity of a reform; they were the centre of a veritable crusade against licentiousness both in literature and in life, which did not produce very deep effects, but reassured alarmed consciences, repressed some outstanding excesses, and created the atmosphere of moral order and balance indispensable to the advent of classicism. The transition here studied owes to it one of its characteristics.

The first play of Vanbrugh[1] had done much to call forth the ire of Collier. With *The Relapse*, in fact, freedom of verve and boldness of situation reach their limit. Here realism is again given full play, with a somewhat heavy touch, that tempts one to liken it to the brushwork of the Flemish masters; and one might also say that, setting aside the example of Congreve, it is to Wycherley that comedy returns, if the tone of the play were not so different from that of *The Plain Dealer*. In place of a harsh, bitter vigour, we have here a force of

[1] Sir John Vanbrugh, born in 1664, came of a Flemish family, established for two generations in England. Very little is known of his youth save that he was imprisoned in the Bastille in 1691. His plays, *The Relapse, or Virtue in Danger* (end of 1696), and *The Provoked Wife* (1697), were performed with great success. With the exception of a posthumous fragment (*A Journey to London*), the rest of his work is composed of imitations or translations (Boursault, Le Sage, Molière: *Squire Trelooby*, 1704; Dancourt: *The Confederacy*, 1705, etc.). His tastes, however, were in the province of architecture; he built several castles or important buildings, among which were the Haymarket Theatre and Blenheim, the sumptuous mansion offered to Marlborough. He died in 1726. *Dramatic Works*, ed. by A. E. H. Swain (Mermaid Series), 1896. See the study of Lovegrove (*Life, Work and Influence of Sir J. V.*), 1902.

invention and Rabelaisian humour which spreads itself out, lively, huge, rollicking, sweeping off all the reserves of the spectator in an irresistible mirth. At bottom, there is behind this verve a pessimism of intelligence, a moral sincerity, a sanity of taste; and the work would not be properly understood, if one did not see in it at once a satire upon the new ideal of sentimentalism, already outlined by Cibber,[1] and the trace of the hold that this ideal was exercising even over rebellious temperaments, for some touches are introduced in *The Relapse* with a view to sentimental effect. This, however, is only a secondary aspect; Vanbrugh, above all, reveals his wit, his humour, his joy of a builder who constructs a play of solid workmanship, and who in it—one hardly knows how—joins two plots in one. This vigour, which tends to mere brutality, develops frankly into such in *The Provoked Wife*, and singularly contradicts the edifying intentions which the author proclaims at times—perhaps under the influence of Collier, with whom he was even then bandying argument.

Viewed as a whole, Vanbrugh's comedies are above all valuable as studies in manners; not that they do not enlarge upon the real, according to a system of voluntary exaggeration; but because they give us the deformation of the truth which the public accepted, and thus enlighten us as to the taste and special bents of that public; while permitting us, when they are reviewed with other works, to form a probable opinion as to what the truth really was. A Sir Tunbelly Clumsey, a Sir John Brute, a Miss Hoyden, are caricatures as much as types; but their interest is not less in one capacity than in the other.

It is permissible to find in Farquhar,[2] despite his merits, a somewhat tame copy of the fine audacity of his predecessors. He also was born with the temperament of a writer of comedy, gifted with facility and talent; but he came under the full influence of the wave of sentimentalism, which seems to have shaken the inner conviction of his art. His first plays are very licentious; and to the end, they show a natural indelicacy, in keeping with

[1] *See below*, Book II. chap. v.

[2] George Farquhar, born in Ireland (1677), studied in Dublin, tried the profession of actor and had his first comedy, *Love and a Battle* (1698), successfully performed in London. Then followed *A Constant Couple*, 1699; *Sir Harry Wildair*, 1701; *The Twin Rivals*, 1703; *The Recruiting Officer*, 1706; *The Beaux' Stratagem*, 1707. His life had all the uncertainty and adventure attending a careless character; he died in poverty in 1707. *Dramatic Works*, ed. by W. Archer (Mermaid Series), 1908; select works, ed. by Strauss, 1915 See study by Schmid, 1904.

the tone of the age. But although he thinks himself obliged, from time to time, to show fight against the attacks of Collier, one feels that at bottom he approves the enemy's cause, and often he himself takes no trouble to disguise the fact. His Irish nature led him to mingle laughter and tears; but it would appear that the desire, perhaps unconscious, to flatter the tastes of the middle-class public, who were more and more asserting their own preferences, explains the deviation of his art towards sentimentality.

In order to do justice to Farquhar, one must not judge him from the same angle of vision as Congreve or Vanbrugh. The interest of his work lies in the expression of an attractive and sincere personality, despite the sacrifices which he chose to make to the fashion of the day; and it is also to be found in the varied nature of his inspiration, which has widened the field of the manners studied, bringing into it new aspects of society and life: the army, the highways and inns, the serious problems of the family, divorce, etc. A taste for nature and truth reveals itself there. He has, on the other hand, verve and wit, knows how to sketch a character, and build up a plot; but none of these qualities is outstanding. A likeable man and writer, he lacks vigour, and his best moments do not attain to decisive originality.

Tragedy, however, did not show a vitality equal to that in comedy. By the side of Dryden in his old age, the period 1688 to 1702 saw no new talent arise, except the mediocre one of Southerne.[1] The late revival of drama with Rowe is posterior by several years; and the middle-class spirit has not as yet followed up its invasion of comedy by reaching the field of tragic art.

5. *Poetry: Walsh, Garth, Blackmore, etc.*—The spirit of the transition is also represented in poetry, by a group of writers who share in certain common tendencies. None of them rises above an ordinary level of honourable talent; their merit lies more in their conscientiousness, than in their inspiration; and this very mediocrity is a sign of the times.

Lustre is shed on the last years of the seventeenth century by one eminent poet, Dryden; but he no longer belongs, properly

[1] Thomas Southerne, 1660-1746, already known by his comedies, enjoyed two great successes with his dramas, *The Fatal Marriage*, 1694, and *Oroonoko*, 1696, the latter a strange play, inspired by Mrs. Behn, not without a certain brilliance, and at times revealing a little of the fire of Lee.

speaking, to this age. With Walsh, Pomfret, Garth, and Blackmore,[1] something exterior to poetry itself comes into the foreground. *One must not try to discover* too precise reasons in order to explain this interval between the generation of Dryden and that of Pope; chance, *which did not bring Pope into the* world some years earlier, is above all responsible. But in some measure, it can be explained by the atmosphere itself of a moment when the progress of technique and form, on the one hand, and the moralising preoccupations of the middle class, on the other, threaten to weigh down and damp the flight of poetic imagination.

So that there scarcely remains anything worthy of praise in these writers, save their intentions; the correct and polished regularity of the verse of Walsh; the soberness, the amiable good sense of Pomfret; the laboured imitation of the *Lutrin*, not without wit and skill, which Garth realised in his poem; and with Blackmore, a certain noble ambition, which is too frequently given over to edifying nonsense, and loses itself in arid deserts, but which shows itself capable upon occasion of vigour, of subtle and compact argumentation, of enthusiasm even, and eloquence. *Neither the beauties of single passages, nor the occasional* gleams of poetry, can redeem—despite the interest of *these secondary figures*, who show so well the passage from one epoch to another, and who recompense an attentive study—the essential mediocrity of authors, who just apply methods and formulæ, or seek in the moral conscience alone the reasons for writing in verse.

To be consulted: Ballein, *Jeremy Collier's Angriff auf die englische Bühne*, [illegible] *etc.*, 1897; *Cambridge History of Eng-* [illegible] vol. ix, chaps. vi. and vii., Charlanne, [illegible] 1885; W. Graham, [illegible] W. Krutch, [illegible] *of England* [illegible] *on Comedy*, [illegible]

[1] William Walsh, 1663-1708, the friend of Dryden and Pope, is in certain respects an intermediary between the two poets, his best known poems are *Jealousy* and [illegible] Johnson, *English Poets*, vol. viii. [illegible] lastin[illegible] bered [illegible] Black[illegible] *Arth*[illegible], an heroic poem (*Eliza*, 1705), etc., essays [illegible] etc.; was praised by Addison, ranked highly in middle-class opinion, but later fell into discredit. *Poems*, ibid., vol. x.

BOOK II

CLASSICISM (1702-1740)

CHAPTER I

THE AGE OF CLASSICISM

1. *Moral Elements and Social Influences.*—The "classical period," to take the term in its broadest sense, extends as far as the decisive advent of Romanticism. But in the century which intervenes between the death of Dryden (1700) and the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), several phases must be distinguished. The first is that during which the characteristics of the new literature reach, by unanimous consent, their strongest degree of concentration and vigour. The literary career of Pope forms the axis of this age. One might therefore consider it as roughly ending a few years before his death, that is to say about 1740. From 1702 until this date, there reigns the relative unity of a literary age. Its general traits originate in those of the Restoration, which they continue, accentuate, and also in reaction modify. In order to understand the general resemblance of these two ages, and the differences which separate them, it is necessary, here again, behind the literature itself, to grasp the movement of thought, in its connection with the social influences at work.

The names by which periods of literature designate themselves, or which they receive from the succeeding age, are not always those which a distant posterity would choose for them, with the help of the perspective of centuries. It is for the sake of convenience, and according to a tradition which dates back to the end of the eighteenth century, that we still term "classical" the generation of which Pope is the centre, and so to say the symbol; in other respects, this name scarcely seems to suit it; neither in inspiration, nor yet in form, does it come very near either to the literatures of antiquity, or to the French model, which in fact it very often sets before itself; both its ideal, and

the methods followed to attain it, diverge from "classicism" in the purely artistic meaning of the word. Moreover, if this epithet is to stand for an appreciation of value, and the sign of an intrinsic superiority, the times are no longer when the writers of the first decades of the eighteenth century enjoyed a pre-eminence of merit as compared with their predecessors or their successors.

But this title of "classical," to which they did not dare lay claim, would have soothed their most cherished wishes; it answered to their deepest desires; it well defines the nature of their doctrine, their effort and their faith. To use the term, therefore, is to remain faithful to their actual intent, and to the consciousness they had of themselves. By observing the harmonious set of rules which seem to preside over beauty, as realised by the noblest civilisations of the past, and as imitated with brilliant success by French culture, these writers wanted to endow England, and believed that they did do so, with a literature which was polished, rational and perfect, and which could be created only in a century of refined and supreme elegance. They lived up to their ideal of classicism in thought and in will; and so this name can justly remain attached to them.

To use it to-day, is at once to give it a new meaning. What to our minds justifies one in employing the word at all, is the artistic and literary motive present in the consciousness of the writers themselves. Now, such a motive derives from an inward preference, of which even those who experienced it have not had a clear idea. The true source and the real quality of English classicism are of psychological nature. Its ideal, its characteristics, its methods, all resolve themselves into a general searching after rationality. The pleasure of being able to understand, the easy sense of simple orderliness, a smooth balance in ideas as in forms, such is the end pursued in those days by the great majority of those who think and write.

This is equivalent to saying that the intellectual phase of the moral rhythm, the beginning of which had been definitely marked by the Restoration, is continued after this period. The transition from 1688 to 1702 introduced slight differences into its intimate quality, but without altering its nature. This phase of the rhythm is even amplified with the new century, attaining therein its full development, and that, despite the qualifications and the limits

which social influences impose upon it in some respects. For a literature which is essentially rational is not the work of a generation; it can come fully into its own, be securely established, only after a process of inurement, through which the average instincts have been adapted to it, and every perceptible difficulty has been smoothed away. One may say that the age of Pope lives more fully, more spontaneously at the pitch of that dominant intellectuality, which during the preceding age was chiefly an irresistible impulse, a kind of contagious intoxication. The Restoration had turned Reason herself into a free, adventurous guide; classicism now makes her a clear and calm adviser. Set modes of thought have now been formed, habits acquired and fixed. This way a tendency has to consolidate by getting more deeply rooted, is a normal consequence, whenever its free play is not impeded, of the energy which first started it on its course; this phase of consolidation precedes the moment when the very success of a mood, and its too exclusive dominance, will prepare the exhaustion of its resources, and the awakening of an inverse need, which will give rise to a transition. Already at the end of the seventeenth century, such minds as those of Sir William Temple, Halifax and Locke showed the advanced maturing of the elements about to produce classicism.

Circumstances are very largely favourable to this development, and hardly thwart it. The Revolution of 1688 does not constitute a break with the past; it inaugurates an organic and regular progress. The upper middle classes associate themselves with the nobility in the exercise of power; a more extensive section of the nation participates in political influence and directs culture. The great merchants and financiers who thus rise into social prominence are the wealthy descendants of the "citizens" of the Puritan Republic; they retain all the vigour of a class that is making headway; but on the other hand, their moral temperament is subdued by the effect of prosperity, and of coming into contact with circles where refinement is of longer standing; they have in them the feeling for social discipline, the respect for all consecrated dignities; with time, they will merge in the aristocracy; meanwhile, they accept from it its scale of literary values. They have no new demands to bring forward in æsthetic matters; on the contrary, the need for order and balance suits their instinct, which is rapidly becoming conservative. The classical

ideal of art, elaborated under the Restoration in an atmosphere of aristocratic elegance, finds full realisation during the reigns of Queen Anne and George I. in a broadened society, whose members are growing more numerous and so diverse, but where the spirit of the literature is undergoing no essential change. The upper middle classes are converted to this ideal; at a later date, they will become its zealous supporters; they will even uphold it against the first onslaughts of Romanticism.

But they only adapt themselves to it by drawing it, as it were, to them. They have their deep-rooted needs, their specific tastes; realists, capable of utilitarian aridness, they however never abjure, as a body, the emotive powers, of which they feel the hold upon life; capable of yielding to the attraction of fashionable cynicism, bringing into political and social intercourse certain forms of corruption, of venality, which are perhaps more natural to them than to other classes, they have nevertheless ingrained in them the instinctive respect for moral laws; they require to live in a moralising atmosphere, if not in an atmosphere of unblemished purity, in order to be at peace with conscience, and feel secure from Divine retribution. A first softening of sentiment, a first and partial reform in manners, are as early as the end of the seventeenth century the psychic counter-assurances in which the middle classes reveal their own individuality, a which enable them to identify themselves with the intellec order of classicism.

The crusade of Collier, the adversary of immorality in theatre, has already been mentioned.[1] Other signs evidence effort, very inadequate as yet but very significant, to ch licentiousness that had now become a menace; this effort is n wholly in vain; in certain domains of public life—if not on the stage—the proprieties are *henceforth a little better observed*. Thus begins a movement, which will be taken up in turn by the teaching of Steele and Addison. At the same time, sentiment reveals itself as an *independent literary motive and source of* pleasure in a group of comedies, then in the first dramas of middle-class inspiration. Here again, the action of *The Spectator* will have been announced and prepared. A breath of tenderness in the literary and social atmosphere, a relaxing in the characteristic tension and dryness where the witty verve of the Restora-

[1] See above, Book I, chap. vii, sect. 4.

which social influences impose upon it in some respects. For a literature which is essentially rational is not the work of a generation; it can come fully into its own, be securely established, only after a process of inurement, through which the average instincts have been adapted to it, and every perceptible difficulty has been smoothed away. One may say that the age of Pope lives more fully, more spontaneously at the pitch of that dominant intellectuality, which during the preceding age was chiefly an irresistible impulse, a kind of contagious intoxication. The Restoration had turned Reason herself into a free, adventurous guide; classicism now makes her a clear and calm adviser. Set modes of thought have now been formed, habits acquired and fixed. This way a tendency has to consolidate by getting more deeply rooted, is a normal consequence, whenever its free play is not impeded, of the energy which first started it on its course; this phase of consolidation precedes the moment when the very success of a mood, and its too exclusive dominance, will prepare the exhaustion of its resources, and the awakening of an inverse need, which will give rise to a transition. Already at the end of the seventeenth century, such minds as those of Sir William Temple, Halifax and Locke showed the advanced maturing of the

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tion throve and expanded, are already perceptible in the opening years of the reign of Anne. The influence itself of the middle classes is bound up with these moral changes by very close and definite connections, which a careful study of the time enables one to grasp.

Thus, English classicism is really based upon a tacit compromise, hardly conscious of its existence, with an adverse social principle, the opposition of which, indirect or concealed in the æsthetic order of things, is not immediately visible save in the psychological order, that is to say, in a domain where clear self-awareness has not as yet penetrated. The men who have had the best intuition of this compromise, Addison and Steele, have only themselves been very vaguely aware of it. In their way of thinking, as in that of the time, it appeared that the observance of moral standards and the correctness of pure modes of living are associated by a natural affinity with classical taste. In fact, the motive force behind the reform in manners was a religious preference, that is to say a rather emotional motive, and finally a mystic one; the rebirth of sentiment, which accompanies and sustains it, is a moral movement of the same character, and of the same direction. The one and the other contradict the pure intellectuality of a rule of life and art based entirely upon Reason. This secret duality introduces a germ of transformation and ruin into the innermost elements of classicism, at the very hour of its full flowering. The eighteenth century will be the history of the slow development of this germ; and to study this period will partly be to try to account for such slow growth.

2. *Literary Forms.*—In summing up the inner origins of classicism, it seems paradoxical to insist upon an aspect of psychological life that is foreign to this doctrine itself. The moralising effort, and the first awakening of sentiment, are not, from the literary point of view, an integral part of the principle of classicism. This develops and is worked out in an indifference—that wishes to be serene—to all that does not countenance the harmonious, regular order of forms, the lucidity and the exactness of inspirations. But there is something more and something else, in the success of a school, than the maxims it invokes, or the ends it pursues in full consciousness. Classicism reassured the vital instinct of the middle classes who were in positions of control, because it stood for a hierarchy, an equilibrium; these classes, in

turn, were reassured *in accepting* it, because at the same time it succeeded in introducing a provisional and superficial, but more becoming decency and fitness, into the life and feelings of *society*. The sobered atmosphere of the time of Queen Anne, with its partial and as yet timid resumption of middle-class culture and emotional life, enabled classicism to develop freely, and also permitted the bold negative spirit in thought or in manners to go just as far through other domains as in the reckless days of the Restoration. It is in this sense that the work itself of Steele and Addison is at the very centre of the final advent of classicism; with them, a rational artistic impulse, and the desire for a benevolent, slightly sentimental correctness in behaviour, approach so closely to each other as to enter into intimate contact.

The association of these two elements is in other ways made easier by the existence of intermediary shades. Classicism in England hardly ever shows itself in a state of absolute purity. Neither from the æsthetic nor from the psychological point of view, can it be said that the literature of the age of Pope is the exclusive product of a single effort and of a simple quality. The authors have temperaments, in which very often an irrepressible instinct gives rise to the personal, lively, emotive impulses which are condemned by the theory of a rational art; and in their subconsciousness there is still the dim memory of all the former ardour of Elizabethan genius. Sensibility, imagination, a lyricism which the repressive action of culture cannot always reduce to correct limits, show through in a word, an image, a movement, an accent, with all the writers of this age. The relatively less pure character of British classicism, as compared with the French, is made up of these numberless and often subtle discordances of mind, of taste, of instinct; of this deeper layer of national originality, which is reflected through, or at times appears on the surface. Despite the irresistible rhythm, the spontaneous attraction which carries the mass of a people to a kind of inner mode of living which they had not at first chosen, despite the sincerity of the classical effort in England, born of a native evolution, and not of foreign influences, it is certain that this effort ends in compromise; in a literature, the mixed character of which is only imperfectly disguised; and finally, in a sort of approximation, very remarkable it is true, to the quality of classicism.

Thus the phase of the literary history to which this name has

been given—a name which it can retain—is built up on conditions favourable to its full growth, and which, even in so far as they are not openly accessory, are actually so by a kind of hidden adaptation. But one must not overlook the men themselves in the study of circumstances. Certain temperaments, and certain individuals, come to the fore in time for the complete realisation of this age. Writers are found to illustrate these dominant tendencies brilliantly, and in diverse ways. Pope, and the group of poets who acknowledge or tolerate his superiority, are naturally the centre of a literature so attentive to the laws of form, that the cadenced and compact expression of an idea is more precious in their eyes than the idea itself.

Close to the poetry dominated by Reason and correctness, must be grouped the various expressions of critical thought, and, so to speak, of active rationalism; and as its activity is now almost universal, we have thus a gathering of many provinces: moral philosophy, criticism, satire, history, politics; and in this vast realm, Swift is king. Another group is constituted by the middle-class writers, with whom classicism shows itself slightly coloured by a moralising and secretly sentimental intention; and here, Steele and Addison are to be grouped with De Foe despite the differences of their literary temperaments. Lastly, one must survey at one glance all the dissident writers—such as clearly show the spirit of the future, and the beginnings of the literature of sentiment. Philosophy, religious thought, comedy, drama, and poetry, will all supply materials for this synthesis of the elements through which the age of classicism, when inwardly tested, reveals, just as did the Restoration, an inner dissonance.

The merely æsthetic plane in which the history of literature is usually placed tends to simplify overmuch our mental picture of successive epochs, by neglecting to excess the secret differences within each age. A study of these differences helps one the better to understand the hidden connection between periods, and the movement which makes them grow one from another. In the light of this analysis, the works of writers glow with an inward transparency, which enables us to grasp the development of their forms, and the links which unite these with the corresponding creative inspirations.

The classical period, however diversified it may appear to us, however fraught with internal dissidence, is yet a relatively

coherent and ordered phase. Artistic expressions in it are more uniform than inspirations. For while the first are connected with the second as effect is with cause, a rigorous causality is here out of the question. In so far as different moods are capable of submitting to identical or analogous laws of expression, the wholly relative moral unity of this age hardens into a more strongly marked artistic unity. This is a common feature of epochs in which art disciplines itself, and tends towards the fixity of a balanced quality. To study the methods by which this hardening is effected, and the reasons for it, is to study the growth and the influence of the properly classical ideal in literature. To study, in a broader sense, the elements out of which this unity is accomplished, those which accept to enter therein and those which refuse, is to study the classical age itself. From one point of view as from the other, if the detail and exceptions are eliminated, there is discernible the stamp of a truly dominant character.

To be consulted: Ashton, *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*, 1883; Barbeau, *Une Ville d'Eaux*, etc.; *La Société Elégante et Littéraire à Bath sous la Reine Anne*, etc., 1904; Beljame, *Le Public et les Hommes de Lettres, etc.*, 1897; Cazamian, *L'Evolution psychologique, etc*, 1920; A F B Clark, *Boileau and the French Classical Critics in England, 1660-1830*, 1925; Dennis, *The Age of Pope*, 1906; John Dunton, *The Athenian Oracle*, extracts from the *Athenian Gazette*, 1691-97; ed by Underhill (Scott Library), 1892; *Critical Essays of the Eighteenth Century*, 1700-25, ed. by *W H. Durham, 1915*; Elton, *The Augustan Ages*, 1899; Gosse, *A History of Eighteenth Century Literature*, 1889; Paul, *Queen Anne*, 1912; Saintsbury, *The Peace of the Augustans*, 1916; Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 3rd edn, 1902, idem, *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 1904; Stanhope, *History of England* (1701-13), 1870; R. H. Wollstein, *English Opinions of French Poetry, 1660-1750*, 1924.

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CHAPTER II

THE CLASSICAL SCHOOL OF POETRY

1. *The Sovereignty of Form.*—To study the history of literature from the inner point of view is to try to reach the last accessible source of invention and expression itself. The price paid for this advantage is that an analysis thus carried out is not laid within the plane of what is, after all, the constitutive fact of a work of art: its form. No doubt, form is bound up with inspiration by links no less close than supple, which allow it a relative freedom, but which permit us, when once the artist has created, to inquire why he has expressed himself in such or such a manner. Nevertheless, to aim above all at a classification of writers and their works based on the quality of the impulse which animates them, is only to give a derivative value, as a principle of study, to the art in which this impulse is clothed.

Such a method would risk neglecting too much the interest, often sovereign, of the form, were it not that it is compatible in fact with the most attentive study of expression. The one thing needful is for it not to be exclusive, but to admit in practice the necessary adjustments. The occasion for a compromise presents itself very naturally, when a school or an age in literature has chosen form as the principle of its identity, and has put its very self into it. In such a case, it is more useful to accept this preference; to view everything from the standpoint of form, to begin with it, and to work back, in the last instance, to the moral attitudes which have been the real source of it. For to do so is only to modify the order of the factors, and to choose a convenient method of explanation.

English classical poetry founded itself upon the scrupulous searching for a perfection, the elements of which almost all reside in the domain of expression. A certain quality, not of creative emotion, nor even of the ideas, but of the order which binds them together, of the language which expresses them, and of the verse which gives measure to this language: such are its main demands.

It follows that the absence of emotion does not in principle destroy this poetry, and that the nature of its theme is left to its own free choice. Carried away by the dialectic movement which sways this age, poetry then is almost always busy with the exposition or criticism of theses. It almost wholly belongs to the class of polemical or argumentative writings. Now, such is also, indeed, the character, at this epoch, of most of the other branches of literature; and, therefore, one should only, from the strictly inward point of view, allot a very small space to the study of the poetry; this should be all, leaving out exceptions, examined at the same time as the prose. One single chapter—that which embraced the diverse aspects of "rationalism in being"—would absorb three-quarters of the classical age.

It is only in appearance that this would be a paradoxical result. But it is probably best, for practical convenience, to avoid it. Therefore we shall not attempt to separate all that is argumentation, analysis, satire or discussion in verse, from poetry; and the versified work of Pope, animated as it is and sustained from beginning to end by the spirit of demonstration, if one leaves aside the flashes of lyricism, will assuredly be part and parcel of this domain, preserving the formal unity assured it by the imperious claim of its prosodic style. With Pope, one must also link up the contemporary poets, the school over which he presides; and survey at one glance the mass of an abundant literature, the essential characteristic of which, according to a tradition here justified, will be that it is written in verse.

2. *Pope; Early Poems.*—The life of Pope is difficult to sum up.[1] To all appearances rather calm, it is nevertheless in a

[1] Alexander Pope, born in London (May, 1688) of middle-class parents—his father was a linen-draper—and Roman Catholics, remained faithful to this creed, which entailed in addition to special taxes, his exclusion from the Universities. Puny and of delicate health, he read ancient and modern writers, giving himself a classical education which, if not solid, was certainly wide The years of his precocious youth, when he was already the very attentive and polished writer, were spent at Binfield near Windsor The *Pastorals* (1709), the *Essay on Criticism* (1711), *The Rape of the Lock* (1712, revised 1714), *Windsor Forest* (1713), form the group of early poems, with occasional pieces, all of which were collected in a

constant turmoil of vexation, inflicted upon it by a restless, nervous, unstable self-consciousness. Forced by his health to live in relative seclusion, he does not find repose even there, but is agitated by the clashing of rival political interests, in which he takes a side, without actually engaging therein; or by literary strife, which stimulates his verve and supplies the subject matter of his work; or lastly and chiefly by his personal quarrels, which most often envenom the other conflicts. From every point of view his life is intimately wrapped up in the history of his time. Despite its occasional meanness, the lapses in dignity, or even in conscience, which are traceable to a morbid vanity, this life is remarkable through the continuous effort it displays, the ever-scrupulous labour of the artist, the success of an ambition which Dryden had not fulfilled to the same degree. The legislator of Parnassus, just as Boileau, and the undisputed master of an art and of a school, he finds himself on an equal footing with the great. He it is who establishes in England the social prestige of the man of letters. Moreover, he is a shining example of what care for perfection and style can be.

His career as an author is longer than one would be led to suppose from the actual duration of his life, for his adolescence is part of it, and not the least important. His first poems form a natural group; in them are to be found, together with a growing mastery of touch, a bunch of spontaneous qualities which are already, at this early stage, all they will ever be. It has even been possible to say that the *Pastorals* remain in a sense the masterpiece of Pope. These little imitations of Vergil, adapted to modern life and English soil with very dexterous skill, are the fruits of a conscious inspiration, slightly artificial, stimulated by literary memories, and teeming with reminiscences; but they also evidence a precocious talent, the sincerity of which is here indis-

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and Satires (imitations, for the most part, or adaptations from Horace), forming with the *Essay on Man* (1933-4) an ensemble, the parts of which, at a later date, were brought together by Warburton. Pope, also, edited Shakespeare (1725) and published his own correspondence which is, in part, faked (1735, etc.). He died in 1744. *Works*, ed. by Elwin, Whitwell and Courthope, 1871-89; *Poetical Works*, ed. by Ward, 1869; *Rape of the Lock*, ed. by Parrott, 1906; *Essay on Criticism*, ed. by Ryland, 1900; *Essay on Man*, ed. by Pattison, 1872; *Satires and Epistles*, ed. by Pattison, 1874. See biography by Courthope (*Works*, vol. v.); the *Anecdotes* of Spence (edn. 1820); studies by L. Stephen (English Men of Letters), 1880; O. Elton, *The Augustan Ages*, 1899; Dennis, *Age of Pope*, 1906; Saintsbury (*History of English Prosody*, vol. ii., 1908); L. Strachey, 1925. A Bibliography of Pope by R. H. Griffith is in course of publication (1923, etc.).

tinguishable from artifice. These lines of admirably easy flow, helped on by an already expert cleverness, which introduces charming arabesque work into their regular pattern, are genuine outpourings in a way; never was the language of poetry more liquid, nor its measure more even and smooth.

More ambitious, and with greater elements of interest, *Windsor Forest*, a poem of a not dissimilar kind, already betrays the decline of an art, the absolute purity of which is only compatible with themes of narrow superficial character. Another poet appears here, who is the narrator, the reasoner, the maker of epigrams; even the description deviates towards something which lies outside its ken—political flattery, history, ethics, philosophy; and one feels, no doubt, that the nervous form will carry the condensed and brilliant idea without giving way; but the continuity of the inspiration breaks down, and the effort made by the thought reveals itself in some unevenness and intermittence of flow. Upon a nature that is personal, elegiac, irritable, without much depth, the rational spirit of the classical age will soon graft a didactic temperament. The work of Pope will gain from it in greater substance; the versifier will draw from it wonderful effects of brilliant argumentation; yet it is not certain if the poetry itself has not lost something in the process. *Windsor Forest* has still to offer a freshness of atmosphere, a feeling for nature that is confined to familiar horizons, but sincere within these restricted limits; and further, a language the conventional tendencies of which are as yet discreet enough to be tolerable.

The Rape of the Lock shows a further move in the same direction. As often happens at this epoch, the aspiration after a big subject, not being sustained by a strong creative mood, stops half-way at the compromise of a mock-heroic intention; the classical period is the golden age of parody. The rational attitude of the writer tends to make him critical, and of a modern turn of mind, while on the other hand, his doctrinal principles force upon him the imitation of ancient models, the gravity of an æsthetic cult; this forced respect, this obsession of the past, imply a constraint, and the spirit of the time finds a subterfuge in imitating antiquity in a vein of mockery. The abundance of the mock-heroic type of literature betrays an instinctive effort in the world of letters to reconcile a little independence with a dogmatic

orthodoxy, and to introduce an element of novelty into an imitative art.

This is not to say that *The Rape of the Lock* is a parody in quite the same way as so many other contemporary works; the subject, however unimportant it may be, has an interest in itself; and the contrast of its delicacy with its serious tone and the traditional trappings in which it is set, brings out its somewhat quaint grace. Nevertheless, it is permissible to think that all this is very artificial. The ingenuity, the wit, an often striking verbal felicity; an occasional note of true imaginative poetry, in the pretty fancy of the sylphs; the skilful handling of the conclusion, so discreetly hinted; shafts of satire which, though light, yet penetrate—cannot make us forget that the laboured application of this art is here excessive; or efface prolix passages, traces of vulgarity, the musky atmosphere of a fashionable elegance, to the prestige of which the poet bows even when he claims to dominate it. The form reveals a greater proportion of periphrases and indirect expressions.

The *Essay on Criticism* is the crowning effort of these early poems. Here one feels that Pope has found his new manner. Since the inner movement of his temperament—accentuated, no doubt, by the influences of the time—carries him decidedly away from the lyrical mood, it is towards literary or moral criticism that a safe instinct inclines him. The search and expression of rules and laws, the intellectual activity which judges, values or legislates, which combines principles or distinguishes shades, such is the kind of poetry best adapted to the thought and creative impulse of the classicism of 1710. The germ of this work is in a theory of criticism, of its maxims and duties. Pope, no doubt, wants to be a creator, not less than a lawgiver; he reminds us that criticism was first of all the servant of the Muses; he upbraids the pedants who claim to be able to make a good poem out of recipes. But the hierarchy thus established is only on the surface; at bottom, the classical age believes that it can understand, and define in terms of reason, all the conditions of the beautiful. A well-taught and well-informed judge must therefore be infallible; his precepts will open up the way to perfection, without any possibility of error; in following his counsel, one will be ensured against all risks. His high office is second to none; he is, in a sense, the supreme man of letters. And thus, from

the problem of how to judge works, Pope by a natural gradation, quite smoothly, passes on to the production of the works themselves. The example of Horace and Quintilian, whom he is constantly imitating; of Boileau, whom he has constantly in mind, carries him away, without, indeed, any resistance on his part; and in the end it is an "Art of Poetry" that he gives us.

The doctrine herein formulated is not cast, as it were, at one stroke, or built up into a firm consistent whole; the thought of Pope, while sharp and clear, is never really synthetic; it is often fragmentary. In a very imperfect order, what is taught is still indeed the gospel of classicism. The starting point is the compulsory study, the imitation of nature. Thus, one can find in Pope something of the spirit of the "Moderns"; in a less precise manner than Dryden, he allows us to see that he makes his own this essential claim: the right to judge the Ancients themselves in the light of a superior principle; the necessity, for the most correct art, of accepting a free inventiveness, a force of originality which is the contribution of the literatures of the new world.

No doubt, following Boileau and Dryden, Pope identifies Nature with the example of the Ancients; the latter, in their discovery of rules, did not invent them; they formulated for all time the conditions of artistic work. And this is how they have come so close to perfection. To study them, to assimilate their practice, is to ensure oneself in the most effective way possible against error. But their example itself, and the true spirit of their doctrine, teach us at times the transgression of the rules they followed, in the interests of a more inward and spiritual observance. With Quintilian, Pope admits that there exist beauties which are above precepts; intuitions, we should say, which the artist cannot justify in abstract right; which appeal to the heart, without passing by way of the faculty of judgment. This breadth of thought, which proves that Pope has grasped the truest idea of ancient art, is again to be seen in the emphasis he lays upon the constructive and sound character of classicism; upon the preference of the whole to mere details; upon the need for a positive criticism, more attentive to qualities than to faults; it is also revealed in the relation he establishes between art and historical environment; each writer, according to him, ought to be judged from the point of view that was his own. Finally, his

literary orthodoxy is steeped in a kind of humanity; a moral, almost sentimental element finds its way into it; the critic has a social mission to fulfil; he values not only books, but men and manners; the enlightened, indulgent censor of literary works, he will not tolerate vice. The close connection between a triumphant classicism and a reform in morals, a first reassertion of the English character through discipline, would thus not fail to show itself in Pope, at the same time as in Addison.

These principles once laid down, the *Essay* very soon loses itself in details. Its general teaching, thus summed up, leaves the impression of something that is rather rich, rather supple. Beside the dogmatism, some elements of relativity appear in it; beside the pure rationalism are to be found the traces of a free and modern æsthetics of sentiment. But if one inspects this doctrine more closely, and examines it in the light of Pope's practice, one recognises that its pliability is due above all to the assimilative faculty of a mind that is still more skilful than consistent. In laying diverse elements side by side, Pope has not been anxious really to combine, or to amalgamate them. He draws his sustenance from the common treasure of critical wisdom, profits by the examples of the Ancients and Moderns alike, and has the merit of welcoming their most fruitful suggestions, of entertaining a liberal and realistic notion of art that is more concerned with things than with words, with qualities than with rules. In fact, the *Essay on Criticism*, in its central effort and purpose, is a lesson in literary conscientiousness, care, and correctness. Therein lies its interest, as soon as it quits the easy domain of generalities; there it is that the mass of its precepts really bear weight. Much more than invention, Pope in effect teaches, it is the form that counts. The ideal talent consists in renewing through expression thoughts that may be commonplace. It is in this sense that he himself has lived and realised his doctrine; in this sense also his contemporaries have understood and accepted it.

The gospel of classicism is, therefore, despite everything, broader and less dogmatically rational than will be its practice. It has better defined the sovereign liberty of art, than it has profited thereby. For it lived above all through the intellect; and artistic creation is not, in itself, of the intellectual order.

3. *The Translation of Homer.*—To translate the ancients is

the narrowest application, but the most direct as well as the surest, of the doctrine of classicism. Dryden had set the example, and it had found many followers. Translations in verse abound in the time of Pope, as during the Restoration. Tonson, the publisher, whose relations with the writers form an important chapter in literary history, publishes in his *Miscellanies*, as early as 1709, an episode which Pope has translated from the *Iliad*. The great poet, already consecrated by success, is then implored on all sides to attempt a complete translation of the Homeric books; this would be to answer the need of public taste, and to establish his fame definitively. Pope accedes to the solicitations of his friends—Addison, Steele, Swift, Garth, and Congreve; Lintot, the rival of Tonson and Pope's usual publisher, makes him the most liberal offers. He is not at all specially prepared for the task; but he will direct his efforts by reference to former versions in English, Latin, and French. The burden of this long undertaking beneath which he often groans, is alleviated, in what concerns the *Odyssey*, by collaborators. So great is the prestige of the Ancients, that to his contemporaries Pope remains first and foremost the translator of Homer.

His achievement, in a way, is quite a feat. This version, which was read and admired throughout the whole of the eighteenth century, and even after, preserves to-day a remarkable firmness of texture; this it owes to the painstaking scrupulousness of a writer to whom art was synonymous with conscience. Pope had the gift of neat phrasing and a rare faculty of verbal condensation; he has built this artificial work in so dense a substance that time cannot easily impair it. He has polished it with a fairly just instinct of sobriety, has adorned it with an elegance which is far from Homeric, but which lends a distinguished touch to the whole. The expression, always carefully selected, possesses a forcefulness, a dignity, and even at times a certain power of evocation. Strains of poetry, an echo transposed into the tonality of this age, can also be heard in it.

But it suffices to let oneself be carried away by the movement of these rhymed couplets, to catch the deep dissonance which parts their music from the rhythm of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Their cadence, regular, balanced, short, and monotonous, is an instrument of suggestion quite different from the long and flexible Greek hexameter. And over and above this metrical difference,

ealed the irreconcilable divergence of the inspirations. It is al that Pope should understand Homer in the same way as his contemporaries; all the effort of archæological reconction and of a more supple understanding which has since n expended upon the subject takes us farther and farther ay from such an outlook. It seems to us that apart from the vitable errors in meaning, a graver and more fundamental ror bears on the very quality of the civilisation and moral life hich Pope wishes to reproduce; the equivalents which he presents nply an ideal which is falsely refined, politely amorous, rtificial, and one in which the naïvety of the original is replaced by a pompous majesty. The simple figure of the antique epic to the minds of this time was haloed with an august grandeur; and Pope is constantly keying up the thought, the feelings, and the words to what they ought to be. His diction, which teems with abstract turns, stereotyped epithets, and the elements of a vocabulary then in the process of hardening into a cold nobleness of expression, is mostly responsible for our impression of an absolute anachronism. Coleridge has said that the translation of Homer is to a large extent answerable for the formation of "poetic diction" in the eighteenth century.

4. *Moral and Satirical Works.*—Assuredly, while shaping his growth in the direction demanded by classicism, the feeling for which he strengthened more and more within himself, Pope developed his talent for satire and argument in verse; and it is in this province of literature that he has written his strongest works. Pure poetry was not the gainer for it; but the vigou of a temperament was thus displayed, and it produced its mos characteristic fruits.

The ambition to be a philosopher grew upon Pope with t passing of time. The concise and brilliant form of his expressi is better attuned to ideas, is more in harmony with moral ref tion, critical judgment, and the writing of epigrams, than w any other theme. And no doubt the couplet, that small cl self-sufficient group of selected, compact words, hardly al of a consecutive linking-up of thought, of long complex reas that is loaded with qualifications, of cumbersome periods nished with clauses; the argument thus tends to resolve itse an unlimited series of clearly defined and equal propositi ends and begins again at each step. It proceeds theref

accumulation, rather than by true progression; once a result is attained, it passes to another thesis, most often without any transition. And within each couplet, the rhythm, the balancing, the relation of the two lines which answer each other, and of the two half lines, separated by pauses for the most part regular, suggest a simple equilibrium, made up of the opposition of two terms; antithesis is the general type of which the rhetoric of Pope has an infinite number of varieties to offer. All this can hardly be adapted to a truly systematic statement.

But there is really no question here of system. Pope borrows his moral ideas; combines them just as imperfectly as he did his literary ideas at an earlier stage; he simply reconciles them through the instinctive unity of his temperament. His attitude is that of a receptive eclecticism. His strongest philosophic dissertation, the *Essay on Man*, is composed of refreshed commonplaces, enlivened with contemporary influences, in which the optimism of Shaftesbury and the deism of Bolingbroke predominate. It takes the pious and somewhat sectarian zeal of his disciple Warburton to discover therein a connected notion of the universe and of life; or to draw up the general plan in which were to have been included, with this poem, the other *Moral Essays*, discontinuous fragments, written at very different times, mostly before Pope had any notion of a possible synthesis, and offering in no way the internal proof of a common intent.

There are none the less among them strikingly successful pieces. The didactic work of Pope is one of the triumphs of classicism. The *Essay on Man* comes very near to what true philosophical poetry can be, and at times attains to it. With a little more warmth of soul, a little more imaginative ardour, the parts of this uneven rhapsody might have been amalgamated into one single mass; as it stands, it has its inspired passages, and its vehement tone lifts up and joyfully carries the weight of the ideas.

Less strained, more familiar, brightened by a sly jocularity, by an irony which would like to be always well-intentioned, or at least master of itself, but which cannot succeed in concealing the bitterness of personal grievances, the *Epistles and Satires* are also remarkably successful examples of this special kind of poetry. Here it is that Pope is most at ease; his qualities fit him admirably for versified talk. Whether the form of the dialogue is adopted,

or the poet is addressing a chosen friend, it is always in action that the mind which occupies the stage is shown; the thought has thus a liveliness of movement, a spontaneity, an animation, without which the moralising would run the risk of becoming heavy.

The first epistles, written shortly after 1730, have no other source, like the *Essay on Man*, than the philosophy of Bolingbroke; they develop commonplaces about the "use of riches," the "characters of men," and "of women." It is in 1733 that Bolingbroke advises his friend to enliven his satire by a modernised adaptation of Horace. This method has already been used in France by Boileau, and in England by Rochester, Oldham, and Swift; Pope discovers in it a fit instrument for his verve, and employs it with delightful effects. His ironic praise of George II., under the crushing name of "Augustus," is a masterpiece. The after-taste of parody so natural to classical art is here commingled with the intellectual pleasure which accrues from the continual sense of the relations, of the suggested and implicit analogies or differences, between the present and the past. This constant and intentional semi-anachronism is not always handled with sufficient ease to be absolutely pleasing; but the suspicion of pedanticism which might emanate from it is effaced by the irresistible effulgence of a witty malice, which, however, is too often sharpened and envenomed by a keen desire for vengeance and retaliation. Underneath disguised names, or recognisable initials, Pope has left us the picture gallery of all his enmities and his hatreds. Many of these full-length portraits are immortal. It is generally agreed, however, that with him virtuous indignation is often fed or even replaced by the smarting of a raw and sore personality.

Recent research would tend to prove that Pope had sometimes to meet the initiatives of his adversaries. Still, his desire was to give himself the air of one persecuted; his attacks claim to be only of a defensive character. In fact, the story of the first *Dunciad* reveals the premeditated aggressiveness of a fiery mind, susceptible, quick to seize upon what is ridiculous and foolish, skilful in throwing it into relief, against authors at times really jealous or secretly malignant, but for the most part peacefully disposed. This, however, is a small matter; Pope has endeavoured to lend his work the apparent excuse of a provocation; it belongs, however, assuredly, to the spontaneous warring

of talent against mediocrity. The impulse which gave birth to the *Dunciad* should be looked for in the common fund of satiric banter which was kept up in the friendly relations between Swift, Arbuthnot, Pope, and Gay, and which produced the successive avatars of *Martinus Scriblerus*, the symbol of the pedanticism of the dull writer. The theme of the work is taken from the *MacFlecknoe* of Dryden; but Swift's influence is to be felt in a certain touch of stressed realism. It was revised on several occasions; the edition of 1743 added to it a fourth book, and substituted Colley Cibber for Theobald as "King of Dunces."

An ambitious, sustained effort of literary and moral satire, the *Dunciad* is inferior to the lighter productions in the same vein. The rather complicated symbolism, the fable, which aims at being thoroughly allegorical, are beyond the constructive faculty of Pope. The poem cannot conceal some constraint and frigidity; the moments of full power, the brilliant episodes, are interrupted by arid passages; the mock-heroic elements, more explicit and more laboured, often look like an unhappy afterthought. Whatever Pope may say, he attacks dead and living persons alike; and the oblivion which to-day surrounds most of their names gives one the impression that his thrusts are lost in space. There is in all this a little of the musty odour which at times emanates from the diversions of the scholar. It is a pity, also, that Pope did not hesitate to upbraid the poetasters for their shabby clothes as for their clumsy lines; and his attempt to pose as the champion of virtue as well as of wit is rather futile. The enormity of the postulate upon which all satires rest, the fragility of that dogmatism which judges and condemns, without ever distrusting itself, or the efficacy of the weapon it handles, awaken a growing uneasiness in the reader. It is the triumph of Pope's genius to have often dispelled this uneasiness, destroyed these reserves, through the sure vigour of an eloquent sense; and the fourth book, in which the theme develops into a criticism, with full grounds, of intellectual education under all its aspects, is of a manifold and substantial interest.

5. *The Classicism of Pope.*—The best passages in the *Essay on Man*, in the *Epistles and Satires*, and in the *Dunciad*, form the summit of Pope's art in the fullness of its maturity; they are also the summit of English classical poetry.

They owe this eminent merit to the union of a temperament

with resolute labour. Pope is gifted for clear thinking, at least with regard to detail; his agile mind grasps the characteristic angles of things, the prominent features of their relief, those by which they resemble or above all oppose one another at first sight. Their intimate and essential quality, the subtle shades also which establish fine transitions between them, the complexities, in a word, and the depths, often escape him; but no one better possesses the definite and accurate mental images whence there springs of itself a striking relation of terms, that is to say, an idea. Rationality thus consists here, before all, of keen and luminous perceptions. On the other hand, the writer knows how to convey this easy, happy exercise of intelligence, how to render it by the most suitable, the briefest and most telling words; and thus the pleasure which the poetry of Pope procures us rises primarily from a joyous intellectual activity which moves among ideas, seizes them, combines them, arranges them into groups, with so much ease that it seems to soar of itself in the full bright light, above the incertitude and confusion of human thought.

The art of expression, very attentive and minute, aims at imparting and still further intensifying this sovereign ease. It succeeds in doing so chiefly through a cadence of the language, which is one with the rhythm of the verse. The heroic couplet is inseparably associated with the mastery of Pope. The effects he draws from it are less varied, of a less poetic quality than those of Dryden; but in a narrow scale they acquire an incomparable effectiveness. The alexandrine becomes very rare; the "triplet" is exceptional; the pauses tend to settle permanently round the centre of the line; the free circulation of ideas between the couplets is repressed by a mental preference, which has become habitual, almost automatic, and which finds satisfaction in short and balanced expressions. The rhyme marks and stresses the end of the line, to a much greater extent than it can be said to add an æsthetic element, a musical touch or an effect of echoing repetition; it is often poor, and at times worse than poor. Thrown out in succession by a concentrated force of energy, which lets itself go each time without ever giving itself away or spending itself, for it retains perfect self-control, these lines are just like glittering shafts; they have the elegance and cold gleam of polished steel.

The beauty, a beauty severe and still intellectual, is here the result of a perfect adaptation, in which the precision of the thought, the aptness of the terms, and the strong regularity of the rhythm, answer to each other, and blend in a nervous and brilliant eloquence.

6. *Diverging Elements.*—Does this poetry appeal only to Reason, to spite, to a sense of comedy, to moral judgment? Is the pleasure it awakens to be found wholly in clearness, justness and order? Or does it stir up sensations and emotions; does it allow for imagery, and does it move our feelings?

The elegiac poet in Pope died young; but he did not die all at once. His voice is still to be heard in the early years of maturity. And even when the classical rhythm of thought and of verse holds full possession of him, some transitory moments will remind us that beneath the writer there is the man, and that his temperament is not simple.

No writer ever showed a temperament of ideal simplicity. A pure classicism—in the sense of literary rationalism—would be an æsthetic impossibility, and would not any more be found in France. The diverging elements which we meet with in the work of Pope prove that the mixed character of his nature, less rich than that of Dryden, is still recognizable. A hereditary and distant background of sensibility seems to revive in it.

Several of the shorter poems are in this respect full of meaning. Not the rather frigid sublimity of *Messiah*, nor the *Ode for Saint Cecilia's Day*, an intellectual transposition of musical effects; nor the *Choruses for the Tragedy of Brutus*, where the false lyricism is of a platitude which the verbal ingenuity cannot redeem; nor even *The Dying Christian to His Soul*, an attempt at a religious effusion, prompted by literary reminiscences, reinforced by classical memories, but of a relative sobriety, of a rather fine tenor of style, in which is revealed the germ of an almost mystic spirituality which Pope owed to the Catholicism of his youth, and which will hardly develop beyond a philosophical deism.

But one must take more seriously two poems which claim to be impassioned, and are so in a large measure. The *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*, composed at an uncertain date and published in 1717, is the most romantic poem that Pope has written. By the subject, the setting, the sentiment, and the note

of personal emotion, it is a sketch of that type of elegiac meditation in which the eighteenth century was to discover a vein of sentimental indulgence, complacent but sincere. There is here something of the future love of tears; and the seeking after this pleasure does not appear to be the only source of the tears. The form remains mediocre, the language conventional, despite fine poetic lines. *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717) leaves one with a mixed impression; in a classical rhythm, through themes complex and curious, among which one makes out the study of an erotic obsession, and an ill-disguised libertinage of fancy, the eloquent outpouring of a soul in torment is powerfully sustained. Never has Pope been nearer to true inspiration. The language itself bears the marks of an ardour which, on this occasion, at times, creates its form in untrammelled liberty. A force, a diffused audacity, are here concentrated in lines which are to be reckoned among the most certain preparations of Romanticism.

It is a rather analogous, but at the same time distinct element, that is to be found in the crude realism with which the correct art of Pope likes to be set off. What one should trace here is the taste for keen sensation, superadded to the intellectual desire for concrete truth; in other words, that aspect of realism by which it is closely related to the attitude of the Romanticists. This tendency of mind has urged Pope to "put into verse"—according to his own phrase—the satires of Donne; it is to be seen very clearly in the *Dunciad;* and a passage like that in which is evoked the brilliant, corrupting voluptuousness of the lands of sunshine and of art (4th book), proves that he possessed among his instincts the slumbering faculty, rarely awakened, of coloured suggestions, in which are united all the powers of the words, the images and the rhythm. Elsewhere, his imagination is severely kept in check by the sobriety, the selection and the moralising character of the themes, although it preserves throughout a robust quality. In such passages, it becomes truly the main inspiration and the mistress of the poetry.

But these traits remain exceptional. Through its central, voluntary impulse, Pope's art resolutely moves during the whole of his career, further away from the inner, secret, magnetic attraction which already is silently bending the course of literature towards a new ideal. The *Dunciad* reacts against the symptoms of an awakening of the middle-class spirit, against the "City

poets," whom it holds responsible for the decadence in taste. Pope does not progress, consciously, towards the future, but confines himself in a severe and lofty notion of letters, by virtue of which he remains, despite everything, the heir of the Restoration.

7. *Swift, Prior, Gay, etc.; Light Poetry.*—The orthodox poetry of the classical age—that which responds to its central originality and to its desire—does not include any very great names beside that of Pope. But numerous are the noteworthy or estimable talents which apply the same standard to the art of writing in verse.

The temperaments, here, do not show very great variety; it is possible to examine this literary output as a whole, and to classify it according to the inner differences which separate the works.

In this way one recognises first of all a group, and that the most important, in which the tendencies apparent in the *Epistles and Satires* of Pope are carried still further. Not that Pope, in fact, has furnished the model: this familiar kind of rhymed conversation is a natural outcome of Restoration verse; and the persistent action of the French example contributes to encourage it. Saint-Évremond, on English soil, had written "petits vers" in the French manner; the continued radiation of French thought and influence is perceptible especially during the reign of Queen Anne in the ease with which this light, amorous, ironical or jocular verse is handled. The inspiration of a Prior, at times, is hardly national; and the reader scarcely discovers anything English in his work save the language.

The object of this poetry, the pleasure it calls forth, are indeed the same as those which the work of Pope had in view. But in place of ambitious themes of ethics, criticism or philosophy, Swift, Prior and Gay reduce the scope of invention, and concentrate it habitually in brief pieces, better suited to the lively expression of a witty amusement, a mockery or a paradox; and in obedience to the same instinct, the form is abridged or modified; the heroic couplet is most often replaced by the four-foot line, on which *Hudibras* had for ever left the imprint of its irreverence. And if there are any long poems to be found, they are almost all of a burlesque inspiration.

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The personality of Swift is too strong not to break out in

everything he writes.[1] The interest of his lines is that they reveal him to us; and to judge them by the wealth of their thought, the forcefulness of their eloquence, the vigour and the bitterness of the intentions with which they are loaded, they ought to make up the work of a first-rate poet. But this work, considerable as it is, is three-quarters composed of rapid improvisations, fugitive poems, where one feels the verve of genius; where the form, on the other hand, has not received the minute care demanded by classical finish. Elsewhere, more polished poems, or pieces in which creation has been so direct and sure that the idea and the words were born, so to speak, in an indestructible unity, have a very high quality, and rank beside the most successful productions of Pope, among the masterpieces of the poetry of this time. The clearness of the thought, the terseness of the language, the nimble movement of the verse with its clever irony, the unexpected picturesque rhymes, remind us of Butler; but with Swift there is greater suppleness, a more natural gift, an exactness of expression which, without the slightest effort, achieves wonderful effects of robust, unadorned, decisive simplicity; and the impression of art springs from this absolute propriety of terms. The measure, regular, and poor in its range of variations, adds nothing to this triumph of style save a mediocre musical value; and one can say that here classical poetry is, still more certainly than with Pope, a perfect prose, raised and carried forward by an adequate rhythm; by a cadence that is too sure, too imperious, not to force upon the inward ear an elementary prosodiacal feeling. To study the poetry of Swift would be to enter into the world of his mind; and it is not here that this should be fitly attempted.

Prior and Gay have fewer secrets to defend, or to reveal; and their moral being is almost entirely, or entirely, in their poetry, however superficial its inspiration may appear to be.

Superficiality is here a merit, or at least harmonises better with a form that is lively, light and rapid. The unpretentious poems of Prior and Gay are often charming; and even when mediocre, they preserve their ease and nimble elegance, their pert tone. On the contrary, the ambition of a great subject, the philosophic, moral, or lyrical effort, have a fatal effect upon

[1] See below, chap. iii. sect. 5. The poems of Swift were published by Mitford (Aldine edn.), 1866; and Browning, 1910.

them. And such, indeed, is the general character of this classical poetry, outside of the work of Pope.

Prior[1] knows how to be a *salon* poet, in the French style. His two epistles *To Fleetwood Shephard* show a witty inventiveness, a freedom of movement, a neat power of phrasing. Like Swift, he recalls Butler, in his octosyllabic measure and stressed rhymes. There is sincerity, along with wit, in many of these short poems *(A Song; The Secretary; Hans Carvel; The Lady's Looking Glass,* etc.); pieces of ironical or sensual badinage, which aim only at pleasing through the easy play of the intellect, the clever turn and pat fitness of the form, or the evocation of a purely unemotional love.

The inspiration of Gay[2] is a little more substantial. His light poems are not without merit, although they do not equal the supreme ease of Prior; one can discover here and there a note of conventional but pleasant lyricism, after the Restoration style *(Damon and Cupid);* a facile and piquant wantonness *(The Coquet Mother);* pretty touches, a rather genuine feeling for Nature, fresh landscapes, intermingled with all the prosaic para-

[1] Matthew Prior, born in 1664, of an artisan family, attracted the attention of the Earl of Dorset, studied at Westminster School, whence he proceeded to Cambridge. As early as 1687 he collaborated with Charles Montague in a parody of Dryden's poem, *The Hind and the Panther;* after the Revolution he was attached to the English Embassy at the Hague, took part in the pourparlers of Ryswick, resided in Paris as diplomatic agent; had published, meanwhile, numerous odes and circumstantial poems During the reign of Queen Anne, he figured as official poet, threw in his lot with the Tory party, helped Swift to publish *The Examiner,* and played a part of first importance in the negotiations which led to the Peace of Utrecht (1713); arrested on his return by the Whigs, he composed *Alma* while in prison; freed in 1717, he received the hospitality of his friends, in particular Lord Harley, and died in 1721. *Works,* ed by Waller, 1905-7, *Selected Poems,* ed by Dobson, 1889; *Shorter Poems,* ed. by Bickley, 1923. See the biography by Bickley (1914); the study by Legg (*M. Prior, A Study of His Public Career and Correspondence*), 1921.

[2] John Gay, born in Devon in 1685, became an orphan while yet very young, and as early as 1708 published a poem on *Wine;* this was followed by pastoral pieces, either in a serious vein (*Rural Sports, 1713*), or half burlesque (*The Shepherd's Week,* 1714); a heroic poem, *The Fan,* 1713, a farce, *The What D'ye Call It,* 1714, and a mock-heroic poem, *Trivia,* 1716 He led, meanwhile, a rather agitated life, suffered vicissitudes, depending mostly upon his friends and patrons for a livelihood and, at length, finding a permanent abode with the Duchess of Queensberry. His *Fables* (1727 and 1738) met with a great and lasting success he was the friend of Pope and Swift, the latter of whom suggested to him the theme of *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), which was enthusiastically received a sequel, *Polly,* was banned by the authorities (1729) Gay died in 1732 *Poetical Works,* ed. by Underhill, 1893; ed. by G. C Faber, 1926, *Trivia,* ed by Williams, 1922; *The Beggar's Opera,* ed by MacLeod, 1906, republished with the music in 1921; historical study by Schultz, 1923 See the biography by Coxe, 1797, study by Hazlitt, *Lectures on English Poets* (*Works,* ed. by Waller, vol. v)

phernalia of fishing and hunting, in *Rural Sports*; life, movement, humour in the songs of *The Beggar's Opera*. But among others that famous piece, *Sweet William's Farewell*, to-day seems to strike a very artificial note in its simplicity; and everywhere the "poetic diction" of this age is more or less cruelly felt. Gay, like Prior (in *Henry and Emma*), occasionally comes across popular and ballad themes; they reap some benefit from the transient contact, a fleeting accent (in *Down Hall*, etc.); but the interposing veil of pseudo-classical form hides from them the true character of this inspiration, and its promise.

The originality of Gay's talent is to be found elsewhere: in a clear-sighted realism, with an inclination to irony, which alternates between the sense of and search for the picturesque, and parody. There is in him a kind of intellectual cynicism that knows how to see freely and make us actually see, and thus to emerge from convention; he renovates the superficial application of the classical ideal by virtue of the truth, concrete and therefore new and rich, of an object, even the most prosaic. His pastoral poem, *The Shepherd's Week*, claims to strike out boldly from the beaten path; it mixes archaisms, imitated from Spenser, with descriptions of the actual world of shepherds which are exact—or pretend to be so. Despite the strange contrast between an artificial literary language, and traits of rustic manners that are sometimes crude, and although under this crudity there still remain the traces of bookish lore, all this *fabliau*-like verve is rather sincere, and not devoid of raciness. Gay's object was to ridicule the use made by Ambrose Philips, in his pastorals, of a background of English observation; unwittingly, he revealed all the fertile novelty of rural realism. *Trivia*, in three mock-heroic cantos, describes, narrates, and celebrates the sights, the incidents, the perils of London streets; while, in a style of the most orthodox, advice on the equipment of the pedestrian is set off by mythological episodes. Never was a subject less rich in poetry; but the art, which is here mainly a question of skill, wit and irony, extracts from this thankless manner a rather lively interest of mere form, in which the essential element is the piquancy of contrast; and because it describes with accuracy a definite local object, this poem has the value of an historical document.[1]

[1] The taste for parody is again seen in the burlesque poem, entitled *The Splendid Shilling*, 1705, in which John Philips (1676-1709) imitated the style and blank verse of Milton.

This vein of dry precision is one of the merits by which classical poetry often redeems the coldness of its inspiration. It is to be found even in the likeable though flaccid talent of Ambrose Philips; and his epistle *To the Earl of Dorset* describes the effects of a Danish winter with a sureness of touch which Thomson will not excel. But the precision of the vocabulary tends to become exceptional; the very development of the classical ideal contradicts it.

8. *Descriptive and Didactic Poetry—Poetic Diction.*—The more ambitious works of those estimable poets do not merit a long examination. The "pindaric" and official odes of Prior have all the verbose aridity of this kind, in which the classical age thinks it due to its dignity to exercise itself just as much as the Restoration. Clever tricks of style, feats in the art of the versifier, no longer stir even a spark of animation in all this dead literature (*Carmen Seculare*, etc.). And if, at times, there does remain a touch of life, it is when the intention of parody introduces some satirical truth into the pompous conventionality (*Parody of the Ode of Boileau on the Taking of Namur, 1695*). Less happy, even in a relative measure, is the fancy to imitate the Spenserian stanza, modified by the addition of a final line of the most unfortunate effect (*Ode to the Queen, 1706*). *Alma, or the Progress of the Mind,* may very well relate in short Hudibrastic verse, and in a sometimes burlesque tone, the philosophic talk of three friends: Prior has not the comic fertility of Butler, his invention is feeble; and tediousness is the result Still more quickly is this the case with the poem of grave import, of edifying intention, in which the wisdom of Ecclesiastes is garbed in heroic lines, somewhat more supple indeed, but still very regular (*Solomon, or the Vanity of the World*).

Despite their great and lasting success in the eighteenth century, the *Fables* of Gay have not better stood the inroads of time. Here and there they have a piquant interest; but their short easy verse is of a jerky monotony; their theme is almost always mediocre, of a poor and forced invention; any impression of reality is destroyed by political allusions, or insipid gallantry, the animals reason and argue to excess; the ethics are coldly banal; and the tone of naïvety assumed is too obviously artificial *The Fan* is a long drawn out and lifeless fancy; *Rural Sports*, where the pastoral has a serious aim, and at times succeeds in displaying some

ion, makes us regret, on the whole, the realism and the dy of *The Shepherd's Week*.

In these works of more ample design, that systematic attempt fine language which has been termed "poetic diction," and ich gradually becomes an essential element of classicism, gives elf full scope. This is not a matter of intention and principle; e theorists of the school are anxious to teach the art of writing ell; but they define their ideal, as traditional wisdom will have , in terms of measure, of sobriety; language, Pope says, ought o be the vestment of thought; nothing is more dangerous than false eloquence; where the foliage of words abounds, the fruits of sense are scarce. Such is the doctrine; an inward necessity, however, tends to lead practice further and further away from it.

Classical poetry, viewed as a whole, is rational in its inspiration. The themes it treats are, therefore, most often of an abstract nature; or at least, the development which is given them inclines to abstraction. For the choice of the terms, the quality of the style, are determined by a deep preference of the mind. Creative imagination, so to say, shows here an intellectual trend. The abstract style is not only a fact; it answers a need.

Now, this inner cause which produces it brings about at the same time other connected effects. Abstraction is in essence philosophic and general; it has the dignity of what rises above the particular; it is invested with the nobleness of universal affirmations. To think, feel, and write in the plane of "reason," is to legislate, even in verse, and on the humblest of subjects, for th men of all countries and of all ages. Besides, this nobleness do correspond with the consciousness which a writer has of h mission; classical art is a priesthood, by virtue of which t modern mind can rise, through deliberate imitation, to august quality of ancient literatures. And as the v character of antiquity is thus falsely conceived, warped an ever self-conscious greatness, with a fondness for maj there radiates from the classical ideal, in so far as the Anc are the object of its veneration, a constant resolve to mai an unfailing standard of nobleness.

In what can this nobleness reside? No doubt, in the su chosen, first of all; these will often be philosophical and g But noble subjects call necessarily for noble language, an through language that their dignity makes itself felt. other hand, some themes must inevitably be familiar and

but here intervenes still another effect of the classical ideal. Stress is not placed upon the originality of the idea, but upon the value of the form. The matter can be known, even commonplace, provided the manner rejuvenates it. This means that the expression ought to offer a character guarded and correct, and on the other hand forcible and striking, without which a time-worn thought will not be able to command attention. The search for verbal intensity, within the limits imposed by severe and correct taste, is another source of the systematic dignity of this poetry. Thus it is that the frigidness of an inspiration born of reason tends to clothe itself in an abstract language, that is to say also in a general language, and one which seeks its energy in the nobleness of its terms.

Nobleness, when it is the outcome of choice, is contrary to simplicity. Classical poetry, therefore, refuses on principle to be nurtured upon the expressive force of concrete, familiar terms, which savour of the freshness of life itself. While society is becoming more deeply permeated with middle-class influence, an aristocratic purism takes possession of literature; art aims at distinction, and turns away with instinctive repugnance from what is low. Periphrase, most often, springs from no other cause. It is by thus losing touch with Nature and with reality, rich as it is in immediate meaning and in an inexhaustible wealth of suggestion, that the language of poetry isolates itself from the necessary sources of living expression. In order to re-establish this indispensable correspondence, a vigorous effort will be required, such as that which Wordsworth will have the courage to make, and of which he will formulate the theory.

But that is not all: the "poetic diction" of the eighteenth century, over and above this diffuse and widespread quality, becomes concentrated in stereotyped expressions which are transmitted from poet to poet. The language of poetry thus becomes conventional, in that it no longer answers to a choice, to a verbal creation, but to a mechanical art, to passive devices. The cause must be sought in the doctrine of imitation now set up as a principle, in the constitution of an official taste, and of a hierarchy of literary works; in the influence both of the Ancients, whom Modern after Modern proposes to follow, and of the models established by the new writers. To this fund of ready-made elegance in diction contribute Latinisms, and frequently Hellenisms, both of vocabulary and of syntax; and also, the terms

which have passed into circulation from the poetry of the Renascence, with a meaning that most often was then precise, close to concrete truth, and which frequent use, gradually removing them from their primitive value, transforms into purely arbitrary signs, whose present dignity is made up of their very vagueness, of their association with the work of writers whom time has consecrated. The history of words such as "swain," or "steed," or "dale," and of their progressive entry into the conventional vocabulary of poetry, allows one to grasp the very general fact of this change.

Lastly, and especially, one must look for the cause of that mechanism in the withering-up of living inspiration, the substitution of literary motives for spontaneous impulses, and the tendency towards verbalism which results from it. "Poetic diction" only takes on its special colouring from the time when it is severed from all direct or immediate relationship with the life of a thought, be it a rational life. It is characterised not only by generality, or by abstraction and nobleness, but also by death.

The store of cut-and-dried language which is thus created, with its unchanging epithets, its inseparable associations of terms, its stereotyped expressions, its periphrases, would therefore not have triumphed over the vital instinct which guides poetry towards the coining of new forms, had it not been demanded by the deep nature of the inspiration itself. But in so far as classicism implies an artistic desire, its conscious effort does encourage this degeneration of style. For the best writers of the Restoration had extolled the search after elegant brilliant phrases, after the pattern of the "felicities of expression" of the Ancients. These "turns," recommended by Dryden *(Essay on Satire)* were, for the minds that had been nourished in the best school of letters, to take the place of the quips, the "conceits" of preciosity, from which the seventeenth century in its closing years sought to free itself. As mechanism was little by little replacing life, and choice was stiffening into mere docility, the "turns" themselves in the end gave rise to stock forms of expression. And thus obscurely, the remains of precious taste, the spirit of verbal affectation, which classicism had not been able to destroy completely, contributed to the formation of this set of epithets, phrases and terms, which from the time of Pope, and especially after his day, overloaded poetry with a fossilised and unbearable elegance. Poetic diction is already perceptible in the Pope of *Windsor Forest*, to

whom shepherds are decidedly "swains," fish "the scaly breed," the sea "the watery plains"—developed, and yet vague formulæ, in which most often the concrete quality of the object, abstracted and therefore impaired, is rendered by a derived adjective, and referred to a neutral term, which suggests the fundamental identity of substances to the reasoning mind. This diction is more marked with the Pope of the *Iliad;* it develops with Gay (above all in the *Fables*). Swift, whose rough sincerity sees through all growing affectations, is almost immune from it, and even jeers at it on occasion (*Ode on Science; A Love Song in the Modern Taste*, etc.).

9. *The Exceptional Note in Poetry; Tickell, Parnell, Allan Ramsay, etc.*—Even at the heart of classicism, however, and with the poets who remain most faithful to its ideal, there are elements that refuse to be reduced to it. The early years of Pope had their flashes of romanticism, and something of that ardour was never extinguished. Several of his contemporaries, in all the aridity of their orthodox poetry, offer us nooks of unexpected freshness.

These are for the most part third-rate poets, whose temperaments are wavering, and who have not known how to enter into a broad and easy agreement with the spirit of the time, as did Prior and Gay. Their very mediocrity leaves them greater independence; and while they vainly attempt to equal classical perfection, they will occasionally avoid it with unconscious felicity.

Tickell,[1] in the rest of his work, is an imitator, and indeed better than a mere follower. But his elegy *To the Earl of Warwick, on the Death of Mr. Addison*, is a justly famous poem, sincere in its emotion, which does not dare to be simple, and invests itself in pompous phraseology, but elevates it with the ardour of inspiration; and the music of his sentiment has here found for its suggestion a rhythm which is truly funereal, organ notes one might say, whilst the great images of death are evoked. None of the traits of elegiac romanticism is absent, not even the avowal of the bitter pleasure the poet finds in grief.

Thomas Parnell,[2] the disciple of Pope, to whose Homer he [illegible]

[illegible] and subjoined his [illegible] cumstantial pieces.

[2] Thomas Parnell, 1679-1718, born in Dublin, took holy orders, was friendly with Swift, and Pope, who published his posthumous poems *Poems on Several Occasions*, 1722. *Poetical Works*, ed. by Aitken, 1894.

furnished the help of his relative erudition, would only be remembered by some facile regular line, and *The Hermit*, a poem very much admired in the eighteenth century, but spoiled by the worst artificiality of style, if he had not written *A Night Piece on Death*, where in a form that remains too classical he already gives utterance to the sentiment of Gray's *Elegy*.

One can see a sign of the same order, an obscure, timid need of renovation through the suppleness of grace, in the affected versicles of Ambrose Philips,[1] which have the fault of being very consciously puerile, but which convey something of the charm of childhood, and with their rhythm know how to recall the Milton of *L'Allegro*. And the softness of his pastorals relaxes and lightens the language of classicism into a rather pleasant fluidity.

But it is with Allan Ramsay,[2] the Scottish poet, that classicism, without abjuring itself in any way, offers the most composite character. His *Gentle Shepherd* is a curious mixture of literary convention and rural realism, in which the conventional note is still dominant. At least there is in this poem the instinct of what native genius and popular poetry will one day be able to produce. The language is made up of English poetic diction, seasoned with Scottish dialect; the line retains the regular run of the couplet, diversified with the free rhythm of songs. The whole, despite much artificiality, has freshness, character, and that shrewd humour which lends to the very solemnity of the classical tone an air of semi-consciousness, and almost of irony.

To be consulted: *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. ix., chaps. iii. and iv.; Courthope, *History of English Poetry*, vol. v., 1905; Dennis, *The Age of Pope*, 1906; Doughty, *English Lyrics in the Age of Reason*, 1923; R. D. Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry*, 1922; Hazlitt, *The English Poets* (*Works*, ed. by Waller, vol. ii., 1894); Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, 1781; ed. by Hill, 1906; Neilson, *Essentials of Poetry*, 1912; Th. Quayle, *Poetic Diction, a Study of Eighteenth Century Verse*, 1924; A. L. Reed, *The Background of Gray's Elegy*, 1924; Saintsbury, *History of Criticism*, vol. ii., 1902; *History of English Prosody*, vol. ii., 1908; Spence, *Anecdotes*, etc., ed. by Singer, 1858; Ward, *The English Poets*, vol. iii., 1884; Joseph Warton, *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, 1756-82.

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[1] Ambrose Philips, 1675-1749, published his *Pastorals* in the same year as Pope (1709) and attracted the latter's animosity; gathered together *A Collection of Old Ballads*, 1723; imitated *Andromaque* in *The Distrest Mother*, 1712. The nickname of "Namby-Pamby" which has remained connected with Philips suggests the idea of sugary sentimentality.

[2] Allan Ramsay, 1686-1758, was the most brilliant representative of a revival in Scottish literature, which took place under the influence of national inspiration. *The Gentle Shepherd*, 1725; *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, 1724-32. *Works*, 2 vols., 1877.

CHAPTER III

THE SPIRIT OF CONTROVERSY

1. *Critical Thought and Prose.*—The age of classicism broadens and intensifies the practice of free rational enquiry, which the Restoration was able, or wanted, to apply only in a rather incomplete way. The effort of critical thought is at the very heart of this age. Contemporary poetry finds therein its true inspiration; and as such inspiration is not in itself creative of any rhythmic expression, the art of writing in verse is led to set up for itself as an end the search for adequate form, and expends its energy entirely in this search.

Outside the field of poetry, there stretches the vast domain in which polemical intelligence gives itself fuller scope. As one passes from the poets to the polemists of Reason, one has the impression of remaining in the same literary and moral plane; from the first to the second, there is continuity and imperceptible change. With the latter, the care of the form is no longer paramount, or is no longer reinforced by the strict laws of regular measure. Thought concentrates on the discussion and solution of problems; art is a superadded need. But as the mind is delivered from former constraints, and broken to the practice of liberty; moreover, as it has created for two generations past a style adapted to the clear statement of ideas, the æsthetic quality is here no longer distinguishable from the justness and the force of the reasoning. The prose of the classical age has merits that are often superior, almost always solid, and the least of these merits is not that they have not been sought after; they spring from the limpidity, the finesse, the vigour with which the energy of intelligence makes itself felt.

Only with some writers of this time has the prose a character of more conscious and refined art. They belong to the group in which purely rational inspiration is diversified with motives of another order. Addison carries the scruple of style very far. On the contrary, it is without desiring to be so, at least directly,

that Swift is one of the great masters of English prose. His main object was to be a polemist. His supremely ironical work must be viewed in the atmosphere of the controversies where philosophy, religion, politics and science wage unceasing war, carried away as they are by the inner enthusiasm of dogmatic or, more frequently, critical affirmation.

2. *The Deistic Quarrel; Joseph Butler.*—The opening years of the eighteenth century are astir with religious controversies. Reason growing bolder sets to work upon the obscure parts of religion, and wants to shed upon them the rays of a natural light. Such an enterprise appears destructive to the essential beliefs of Christianity, and apologists rise up in their defence. On either side, the arguments are of a similar order; they appeal to the authority alone of reasoning. After a varied history, the victory seems to rest with the champions of orthodoxy. But they have wounded themselves with the very weapons they employed; a long and bitter struggle leaves the public mind uncertain and weary, and inclining towards indifference or scepticism.

The men who submit to a purely human test the nucleus of revelation which the Reformation had preserved, prolong the line of critical thought which had been traced out by Protestantism in the sixteenth century. But in the seventeenth they have more direct predecessors. Lord Herbert of Cherbury had found in internal evidence the data which sufficed for a philosophical creed. At a later date, Locke demonstrated the "reasonableness" of Christianity (1695), while Charles Blount (*Anima Mundi*, 1679) had given a systematic form to the thesis of a religion according to Nature. The deep-seated need for rationality which is the characteristic feature of this age was to emphasize the latent conflict between revealed dogma and the demands of intellectual judgment; whilst the rivalries of sects, and their mutual persecutions, by weakening the prestige of the churches, drove the freest minds to enquire after a lay form of belief.

The Deists of the classical age, with some timidity at first, then with aggressive daring, carry these tendencies to the necessary conclusion. They are looked upon by their contemporaries, whose feelings they have shocked, as impious infidels. At the present day, the perspective of time enables us to better understand them. Theirs, on the whole, were temperaments keenly desirous of a truth that was rational, of sincerity, more than of a

useful, passive conformity, or of humbleness. Their attempt to join up the domain of Reason with that of Faith points to the effort by which Locke had established their equivalence. If religion conforms entirely with good sense, they say, it cannot be in any way contrary to it; and so where religious tradition has some mystery to offer, some apparent absurdity, it is religious tradition that is at fault. Several of the capital tenets of Christianity are thus endangered; and the Establishment, the clergy and the hierarchy, become quite human and arbitrary institutions. It is no wonder, therefore, that Deism, despite the very positive character which it did not want to relinquish, should have been denounced almost universally as a doctrine of negation pure and simple.

The series of its outstanding works opens with the *Christianity not Mysterious* of Toland [1] (1696), which deduces from the idea itself of revelation the necessity for an intelligible belief, and makes no distinction between faith and clear cognition. A Catholic by birth, Toland evolves towards Protestant liberalism, then towards the Anglican Church, and finally towards an independent pantheism. The *Discourse of Free Thinking* of Collins (1713) draws from the principle of rational liberty, which the latitudinarian theologians had accepted without reserve, consequences which were destructive with regard to the authority of the clergy. The *Discourses on the Miracles of Our Saviour* by Woolston (1727) are animated by a spirit of ironic hostility against priests, the jealous custodians of tradition; he assails the official version of the Miracles in the New Testament, where he believes that he can make out improbable or absurd elements, and concludes in favour of the wholly symbolical and spiritual character of the Sacred Book, which, he declares, should strengthen the prestige of a reasonable religion. The work of Tindal (*Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 1730) draws the general conclusions resulting from the application of Reason alone to religious problems. He starts from the very formulæ of contemporary theology, which affirmed the accord between faith by revelation and natural faith, and from it deduces the superfluousness of the first, or at least, submits it entirely to the control of the second. Finally,

[1] John ... mas Woolston, 1669-
1731; Mat ... see Leslie Stephen,
History of ... ; and J. M. Robert-
son, *Short* ...

Peter Annet, in *The Resurrection of Jesus Examined by a Moral Philosopher* (1744) concludes openly by disbelieving one of the vital articles of traditional Christianity.

Such theses roused the ire of many, and called forth a great number of refutations. Denounced and condemned by the Church authorities, worried in some cases by the civil power, the Deists avoid for the most part the rigorous application of the law, by being prudent in their language; they most often declare that they are still Christians, and only desire to rid religion of the dross of unreason. But the significance of their writings does not escape the orthodox believers. Armed with a knowledge that is usually superior, and with equal intellectual sharpness, the champions of the Church find fault with the erudition, the character or the private life of their adversaries, just as much as with their dialects. The Deistic controversy is remarkably violent.

Among all the apologists are to be singled out Clarke,[1] Warburton and Butler. The first, a man of supple and versatile mind, brings to the controversy his scientific knowledge, his acquaintance with philosophical questions, and a somewhat formal rigour of mind. He refutes Deism in the name of logic and metaphysics. His *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* (1704), and his *Discourse Concerning Natural Religion and the Christian Revelation* (1705), leave a lasting trace upon English philosophy in the eighteenth century. Those souls which are perturbed by the negative tendencies of religious rationalism here find an orthodox conciliation of Reason with Faith. Clarke has notions methodically linked up together about the existence and the attributes of God; from the wisdom and goodness of the Creator he draws very clear conclusions as to the good and evil in human actions, and boldly intellectualises ethics. His theory of the pre-established "fitnesses" of things will stimulate the robust irony of Fielding.

Warburton is not less of a reasoner, and adds the telling keenness of an aggressive eloquence to the weight and force of arguments. A theologian, moralist, political writer, literary critic and editor of Shakespeare, the future Bishop of Gloucester supplies the figure of the classical age with one of its significant traits. He raises the passion for debate to its climax, in a century when the faculty of persuasion has unlimited confidence in itself.

[1] Samuel Clarke, 1675-1729; William Warburton, 1698-1779.

Less richly gifted and with less originality and humour, he is like a first sketch of Johnson. The friend and favourite disciple of Pope, he systematises to excess the moral ideas of his master, and makes himself the spirited defender of the orthodoxy of the *Essay on Man*. His *Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated on the Principles of a Religious Deist* (1737-1741) belabours at great length a thesis which for the needs of the cause at issue he treats as a strong point of his adversaries.

Anglican apologetics reach their culminating point with Joseph Butler.[1] His effort has given to the whole century a feeling of philosophical security against the threats of criticism; he has awed doubt, and comforted faith; and in the estimation of his contemporaries, has finally conquered Deism. Nothing is more English than his *Analogy*. Its method is severely intellectual, but inductive; in its general trend, it takes up again the favourite argument of the adversaries of revelation; it discovers in reality a scheme of natural religion; but it also finds in it an imperious invitation to go beyond the latter, and rise to the full belief of the Christian. The point of departure is thus the analysis of the data of human experience.

The life of man, when properly tested, reveals its own insufficiency; it necessarily implies a system of ends, logical but concealed from our understanding, where our earthly destiny is inserted between two mysteries, upon which revelation projects the only possible light. The mainspring of this reasoning lies in analogy, that is to say in the instinctive application to the whole order of the universe of a principle of continuity taught us by experimental reality; analogy governs our acts in virtue of the law which commands us to obey an enlightened view of our interest; it produces faith, according to this rule of the mind that an extremely strong probability is equivalent to a certitude. Thus this doctrine, which, at times, makes us think of Pascal, recalls rather the argument of the wager than the thesis of knowledge by way of the heart; utilitarian and relativist, it is already set in the direction in which the pragmatism of our times has developed.

Despite the ingenuity, the subtlety of which it gives proof, by

[1] ... took orders, published in 1726 his *Sermons* which ... 36 *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and* ... *ourse of Nature*, which quickly acquired the ... Bishop of Durham in 1750, he died in 1752

showing that in the Christian dogma lies the necessary crowning of empirical wisdom, it owes its force to its realism. It has a grasp of the true and actual conditions of human life, of the silent and scarcely conscious inductions by which are determined the tacit inferences of our thought. It analyses Nature in a mood that wishes to be objective; it probes it, without showing it the secret complacency of the Deist; it perceives the character of things with a sober lucidity, that inclines to pessimism. It has therefore exercised a deep and durable influence. But while it is relatively realistic for its century, it is no longer sufficiently so for ours. To-day, its postulates are immediately visible. The science of Nature and that of man have come to be seen in a new light. To us the universe appears infinitely more complex than when Butler viewed it; and the lesson of a kind of implicit Christianity has ceased to emanate from it for those who are uninitiated; indeed it was not there, save on condition of having been first of all put there. Belief, just as incredulity, invokes other arguments to-day. Butler's system remains one of the most vigorous products of English thought in the eighteenth century; through its quiet anthropomorphism, its full confidence in Reason, which empiricism limits but does not weaken, through the assurance with which it metes out its share to mystery, and deciphers the plan of existence as if it were some familiar and simple text, it fitly represents a time when it seemed to be the extremity of modest caution to accept the view that the Beyond was not completely intelligible.

3. *Political Thought: Bolingbroke, Mandeville.*—Bolingbroke [1] is in secret or avowed sympathy with Deism; he it is who furnished Pope with the outlines of the religious philosophy laid

[1] Henry Saint-John, born in 1678, of ancient family, was by birth destined for a public career; he shared with Harley the leadership of the Tory government of 1710, and in 1712 was created Viscount Bolingbroke; the death of Queen Anne in 1714 interrupted his plans for a Jacobite Restoration and caused him to flee to France, where he was attached as Secretary to the Pretender. Allowed to return to England in 1723, he was excluded from the House of Lords, and bitterly opposed the Whig minister, Walpole. After a further residence of seven years in France (1735-42), he resigned himself to the complete failure of his political hopes, and died in 1751. His works were published by Mallet and comprise *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, 1736; a letter on *The Spirit of Patriotism*, 1736; *The Idea of a Patriot King*, 1738; and letters or treatises such as *Remarks upon the History of England*, and *A Dissertation upon Parties*, published in the *Craftsman*, the organ of the opposition to Walpole, from 1727 to 1731. See Churton Collins, *Bolingbroke*, 1886; W. Sichel, *Bolingbroke and His Times*, 1901-2; Hassall, *Life of Bolingbroke*, 1915; Butler, *The Tory Tradition* (Bolingbroke, Burke, Disraeli, Salisbury), 1914.

down in the *Essay on Man* which was not without awakening much uneasiness on the side of orthodoxy. His posthumous essays reveal an attitude of intellectual irony with regard to the superstitions with which, he hints, primitive religion based upon Nature had saddled itself throughout the centuries. Though this disrespect is aimed, for the most part, at paganism, or at Roman Catholic rites, yet a set purpose of free thinking as to the historical elements of Christianity is ill disguised. But Bolingbroke is also a political writer, an historian, a moralist. His figure of a great nobleman, enlightened, scheming, sceptical, a patron of the arts, and concealing very keen personal disappointments beneath a mask of superior indifference, is very interesting. He played a foremost part in the literature and the life of the classical age.

His ethics and his philosophy have nothing original about them. His general views on the origins of the English Constitution, or on the recent struggles waged in the name of the balance of Europe, have breadth and penetration, but belong to literature rather than to history. It is in the domain of politics that his thought has attempted a personal synthesis. Of a clear, alert, even a realistic mind, he understood that the weakness of the parliamentary system, more obvious every day with its success, would offer to a statesman the elements of a positive doctrine, capable of rallying round him all the forces of reaction, which by comparison would become forces of progress. To what extent was the opportunist Toryism thus constituted sincere? It seems that Bolingbroke threw his feelings into it, at the same time as he staked upon it his political fortune. He shows up in a very strong light the excesses of party rivalry, chases away like idle phantoms the antiquated jealousy of a royal absolutism from henceforth doomed; evokes the principles of the Revolution of 1688, and claims to apply them better than the corrupt administration openly practised by Walpole; urging all good citizens to be reconciled, he singles out the national idea as the means to unify wills no less than interests; and places at the head of a unanimous nation a prince who shares the feelings of his subjects, who has a deep sense of his duties, and is the living symbol of the fatherland.

This apology for a renewed and modernised monarchy, associated with the theme of patriotism, now becoming a distinct senti-

ment, and based on the moral forces of imagination and the emotions, was to be brilliantly successful in the nineteenth century. It is impossible not to perceive in Bolingbroke a kind of unconscious cynicism from the way he handles these psychological mainsprings of action. He is too clear a thinker, too clever in his ambition, to allow us to believe in a deep enthusiasm of feeling; and he is too desirous of speaking the language of impassioned conviction, to invest his arguments with the pure virtue of direct simplicity. The eloquence with which he pleads his cause is animated, warm, but never soul-stirring, and wakens in the reader a secret uneasiness. But as a writer he has distinguished merits; his language, a trifle ornate, is full without losing in firmness, and has a natural rhythm, an easy harmonious sense of balance, which secure a place for it among the brilliant examples of classical prose.

Mandeville [1] also applies a lucid analytic mind to the examination of the political and moral basis of society. But his enquiry burrows and dissects in quite another way. Conceived in the same spirit of rationalism, it sacrifices nothing to the eloquence of sentiment. It recalls Hobbes by the unrelentingly keen spirit of the research. Still more realistic than with the author of *Leviathan,* it does not superimpose a system of social metaphysics on the cold scrutiny of what exists.

The intention which animates these short treatises, as original as they are frankly cynical, is the wish to get at the forbidden or obscure truth of things; at that truth, hurtful to the preferences and sentimental habits of man as a social being, and against which manners, conventions, and psychological life itself, have erected countless barriers. The uncompromising rationalism of Mandeville is singularly in advance of the movement of modern thought, and in order to find its posterity, one has to come right to the "immoralist" thinkers and psycho-analysts of contemporary times. His thesis is that politics, with its deep inner dependences and hidden relations, links up moral behaviour with the success

[1] Bernard Mandeville, a medical practitioner of Dutch origin, born in 1670, settled in London and published in 1705 a philosophical poem, *The Grumbling Hive, or Knaves Turned Honest;* republished in 1714, then in 1723, with notes, remarks, additions, etc., under the title *The Fable of the Bees; or Private Vices Public Benefits.* He also published *Free Thoughts on Religion,* 1720; *The Origin of Honour,* and *The Usefulness of Christianity in War,* 1732; and died in 1733. See the study of Sakmann, 1897; F. B. Kaye, edition of *The Fable of the Bees,* with introd., notes, etc., 1924.

of States according to formulæ quite different from those established or imposed by the official theory of conduct. This latter makes no distinction between the duty of the individual and that of a people, and affirms that for the former as for the latter prosperity is bound up with virtue. In fact, Mandeville declares, a nation is only rich and powerful through the vices and the corruption which are inextricably interwoven with its activities of every kind. London is the centre of a flourishing commerce, and the filthiness of its streets is evidence of the fact. How can one hope to have them absolutely clean, without at the same time desiring that they should be less seething with trade? To unite austere virtues with the refinements of civilisation, is a vain Utopia. In a republic of merchants, all compete to rob and cheat their neighbours more; the egoism of each will become the happiness of all, provided a wise government harmonises and reconciles all these blind forces through limiting the ones by the others. Similarly, ethics are purely conventional. Each person, by nature, thinks only of himself. But society requires altruism; it produces it, cultivates it, by rewarding it with praises and honours; and men, vainglorious dupes, do through pride what their instinct urges them not to do.

Such is, at least, the active thought of Mandeville, and that which radiates imperiously from his work. On the surface, he respects moral observances; theoretical duty and absolute uncompromisingness, in accordance with official watchwords, retain their prestige; and the authority of principles is held up above all infringement. In fact, this apparent orthodoxy only heightens, by a kind of silent irony, the contrast, endlessly suggested between the public reasons for and the real motives of human conduct.

Although thus veiled by transparent reserves, these analyses reveal a robust mind, firmly resolved to shake off the universal authority of fictitious values; rough, and rather indelicate, overstepping the correct limits, unmindful of fine shades; but sound, and animated by a scientific will. What would its conclusion be? Probably a clear-sighted wisdom, the outcome of moral modesty. It is directed against the austere professors of a puritanism which adapts itself very well, in reality, to deception in social life, and to cheating in business; it also has in view the idealistic and sentimental optimism of Shaftesbury. In the political order of things, it seems as it were an anticipatory outline, traced by an

eloquence. Though he claims—as one might expect—to be the most pacific of men, the joy of fighting, the intoxication of a victory foreseen, expected, and enjoyed, cast a glow over the five hundred pages of his *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris.* There is something about Bentley that is better than the literary erudite, or the controversialist; he is already a modern savant. He explains literature and philology by means of linguistics; he makes, or opens the way for, many a discovery by turning to Greek dialects, metrics, and monuments. Nothing is wanting to this mind, save a certain detachment, the salutary liberation from one's self, the fine perception of superior artistic fitness. Thus we see his dogmatism and personal sentiment in the end crushing out his critical prudence; and his edition of Milton, strewn as it is with gratuitous corrections, is the strange error of an adventurous fancy.

In leaving the field of the old literatures, Bentley was quitting the solid ground, every corner of which he had explored. He stands as the greatest and last witness of the incomparable prestige of Greco-Latin humanism. By a rather paradoxical fate, *his part in the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns is not,* superficially, what one might be led to expect. In demonstrating that the so-called *Epistles of Phalaris* are not authentic, he destroys an argument utilised by Sir William Temple to establish the superiority of the Ancients (1690); and thus makes it possible for Swift to castigate, as having contemned them, the very man of his time who knew them best *(The Battle of the Books).*

In principle, Dennis [1] is for the Ancients; Shakespeare, he holds, is inferior to them despite his great merits, because he violated the unities, of which they were the inventors. But a background of national temperament comes to light in Dennis; he places Milton, from certain points of view, above Vergil. Very self-willed, his mind has firmness, and his abusive violence knows how to sting. He makes an interesting effort to deepen the grounds of criticism, to analyse the philosophical elements of the beautiful. His objections to Pope's *Essay on Criticism* are

[1] John Dennis, 1657-1734, travelled in France and Italy, wrote for the stage, replied to Jeremy Collier, and led from 1700 onwards the life of a professional critic, in bitter conflict with most of the great writers of his time. He published *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry*, 1701; *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry*, 1704; *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare*, 1712, etc. See H G Paul, *John Dennis*, 1911; Lenz, *J. D*, 1913.

some dryness, and even from a dash of cynicism. She is vivacious, witty, has an original gift of observation, a faculty for understanding the different exotic modes of life, and for painting them, a cultured taste, some pretension to philosophy, and with that a practical sense, and a great variety of interests. Despite the ease of her style, her correspondence, which she revised and which in every way is steeped in literary intentions, cannot be compared, as she hoped it would be, with that of Madame de Sévigné. She revealed the Turkish Orient to the general English public; and her friendships, her enmities, her famous quarrel with Pope, who was her admirer before he assailed her with biting irony, all give a rich documentary value to the story of her life.

The vein of satiric description, closely allied to that of parody, which runs at the very heart of the classical age, crops out again in a whole literature of burlesque, where artistic and scholarly inspiration rejoins popular realism. Below the *Dunciad* of Pope, the *Beggar's Opera* of Gay, the *Gulliver's Travels* of Swift, and beside the *Splendid Shilling* of John Philips, one must not forget the *Hudibras Redivivus* of Ned Ward (1708), in short lines after the style of Butler, nor the *Amusements Serious and Comical* of Tom Brown (1700).[1] The eighteenth century opens, as the seventeenth had closed, with an exuberance of criticism and mockery, where liberty of thought seems to be practised in a mood of self-satisfied display.

6. *Universal Criticism; Arbuthnot, Swift.*—Controversy begets controversy; it also produces scepticism. In the atmosphere of party strife and of the clashing of ideas, the average mind is drifting towards the lassitude, the jaded indifference which will mark the mid-years of the century. With vigorous thinkers, who give themselves up wholly to their beliefs, and ardently live through their intellectual adventures, doubt cannot be superficial, and light to bear; the universal irony with which they envelop themselves, and which seems to dissolve all the disappointments of heart or brain into a mere play of the critical intellect, disguises but ill the inward torment born of a moral restlessness. One must not, in all probability, lay too much stress on the moral kinship between Swift and the Romanticists, who were inclined to recognise in him one of themselves. But one

[1] Tom Brown's *Amusements* and Ned Ward's *London Spy* have been re-edited by A. L. Hayward, 1927.

can see in him, along with the triumph of the rational lucidity with which classicism wanted to light up the correct order of life and art, the symptom of the inner uneasiness which a Reason too well armed for destruction could not escape, while it only met on every side with rival negations.

Arbuthnot[1] is inseparable from Swift. He was his friend and lived in mental companionship with him; from the circle to which they both belonged there issued works united by an affinity of inspiration, and many a hint which others knew how to put to profit. A supple, alert, original, seed-sowing intelligence, he has influenced Swift to a greater degree than he has been influenced by him. Of less pronounced features, but not without a certain family resemblance, he deserves to be remembered by the side of his great friend.

It is not easy to estimate the share of Arbuthnot in the common fund of ideas, images, symbols and pleasantry to which not only he and Swift, but also Pope, Gay and others contributed. His *John Bull* recalls in several places the *Tale of a Tub;* on the other hand, *Gulliver's Travels* owes its birth to *Martinus Scriblerus*, a general theme, no doubt of collective origin, but the most direct development of which seems to be due to Arbuthnot. As for the echoes and variations of this theme in the literature of the day, there still subsists about them a great deal of uncertainty.

One thing is clear, and that is the frame of mind to which these diverse works give expression. Keen and critical thinkers, instinct with the intellectual craving for realities, find themselves in contact with one another, mixed up with the politics of an age when all the devices of government are laid bare, when power is transferred to parties, when opinion, officially in the ascendant, is subjected to all the caprices aroused in it by secret manœuvring; when public life is the triumph of insincerity and fraud. Stimulated by the analysis of the deceit which social appearances serve

[1] J. Arbuthnot, born in Scotland (1667), taught mathematics in London, then [illegible] ayed an [illegible] umerous [illegible] 1713 he [illegible] *criblerus* [illegible] (1714), [illegible] e of the [illegible] Opposition, in a way that still remains obscure. He died in 1735. His *Miscellaneous Works* (1750) are only partly authentic. *The History of John Bull*, Cassell's Nat. Libr.; ed. by H Teerink, 1925. See Aitken, *The Life and Works of Arbuthnot*, 1892.

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[1] [illegible] (1667), taught mathematics in London, then [illegible] on of Queen Anne (1709), he played an [illegible] (1710-14) and in 1712 wrote numerous pamphlets. [illegible] he *History of John Bull*, etc In 1713 he formed with Pope the Scriblerus Club, which produced the *Memoirs of Scriblerus* (published in 1741). [illegible] (1714), he retired into privat[illegible] e of the Opposition, in a way [illegible] His *Miscellaneous Works* (17[illegible] hn Bull, Cassell's Nat. Libr.; ed. by H. Teerink, 1925. See Aitken, *The Life and Works of Arbuthnot*, 1892

to cloak, Arbuthnot, Swift, Pope and Gay encourage each other in the ironical searching after false intellectual values. Before their tribunal are summoned wretched poets, false savants, quack doctors, pretentious scholars, humanists puffed up with bookish learning. A sort of general revision of science and art is instituted; and this universal criticism, so bold that it dares assail the superstitious obsession of ancient literatures, takes up again the charges of *Hudibras* against an obstinate scholasticism that will not die.

Just as Butler's satire, so *Martinus Scriblerus* exaggerates the whims, the oddities, the wrongs of pedantic ignoramuses, overlooking the healthy soul of curiosity that is often to be found in them; above all, it obstinately attacks adversaries who have been conquered time after time, and it pursues them under their already obsolete forms rather than under the new forms with which they manage to invest themselves. In this excellent fancy, there is a somewhat forced air of caricature. But the claims of intellect against foolishness are affirmed with a clear, robust and sovereign good sense.

Arbuthnot has left his mark upon this common fund of doctrine. Through his *John Bull* also, his *Political Lying,* and the picture of his personality that we find in the works of his friends, he possesses a distinct literary physiognomy. He has the gift of humour, transposes into impassible observation a full and concrete sense of the innumerable absurdities of life; and his sober art, vigorous, often bitter and realistic, recalls the tonality of that of Swift. A doctor, he knows the intimate connections of body and soul, and looks at the caprices of character from a physical point of view; and yet, his vision of moral things is direct and profound; his portrait of John Bull has definitively drawn the first outline of this national English type. He has a creative imagination for allegory, and sustains the portraits of his symbolical characters with an accurate sense of the relationship between the sign and the thing signified. With him, experience and reflection have not soured the power of feeling, but have matured it into a humane and tolerant philosophy, the kindly radiation of which was felt by all who came near him. His rationalism is refined into a humility of the intelligence. He is a writer through the firmness, the precision, the incisiveness of his style; and his artistic invention has been fruitful. The figure of

Martinus Scriblerus, ridiculous, pitiable, and obscurely appealing, and the episodes of his childhood, are additions to the unforgettable types of human comedy; Sterne remembered them in *Tristram Shandy*, Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus*.

Swift [1] is the greatest writer of the classical age by the force of his genius; the concern for art and the care of form are not in his case the essential motive of creation. His work owes an exceptionally broad scope to the freedom and penetration of the thought. He carries the rational criticism of values to a point where it menaces and impairs the very reasons to live. In his case, therefore, lucidity and the search for balance are suffused with an intellectual emotion, concentrated and intense, which at times cannot be distinguished from an impassioned bitterness, and the expression of which, despite the restraint of irony and humour, possesses a pathetic vehemence. Attaining thus to the utmost limits of satire, he leaves the normal, simple plane of a literature of Reason; the stifled, repressed voices of sensibility

[1] Jonathan Swift, born in Dublin in 1667, came of a family of Yorkshire origin; lost his father at an early age, studied at Kilkenny and Trinity College, and was attached as secretary to Sir William Temple, until 1699 Already in 1696-7 he had written a great portion of *A Tale of a Tub*, and *The Battle of the Books*, published in 1704. It was at the home of Temple that he met Esther Johnson, the future [illegible]

[illegible] known in London, the false position of Swift between the two women who loved him, and of whom (it is possible, but improbable) he may have married one (Stella) was relieved by the death of Vanessa; that of Stella, in 1728, came as a still greater blow He sympathised, meanwhile, with the sufferings of the Irish [illegible] *The Drapier's Letters* (1724) *Gulliver's Travels*, [illegible]

[illegible] *respondence*, ed. by Ball, 1910, etc., *A Tale of a Tub*, etc., ed by Guthkelch and Smith, 1920, *The Battle of the Books*, ed. by Guthkelch, 1908; *Gulliver*, ed. by [illegible] *vie et ses* [illegible] Cordelet, [illegible] *the Battle* [illegible] Freeman, 1921; Eddy, *Gulliver's Travels, a Critical Study*, 1923; [illegible] *Jeunesse, le Conte du Tonneau*, 1925.

and instinct, which reality in its baseness and cruelty afflicts with many wounds, supply the subdued accompaniment of soul-stirring chords to the clear accents of the intellect. And just as the language of Swift has this mixed tonality, so his thought outreaches the stage of pure criticism; it finds itself at work conserving, if not constructing; it clings to the relative and provisionary truths which can shelter the being of man. Beyond the spirit of classicism, of which he is the supreme mouthpiece, one perceives in Swift the latent powers of a virtual Romanticism; and further still, the audaciously humble solutions of the most modern wisdom.

It is permissible to think that these attenuations of the spirit of criticism, these voluntary sacrifices to good sense, are not the most original part of Swift's work. His practical adhesion to moral or social beliefs which his merciless perspicacity saw through and through is to all appearances a sincere act, and one which no logical need can lead us not to respect. But he has not explained the submission of his reason on principle; the lesson of his intellectual destiny is uncertain; his example, deprived of all contagious virtue, remains strictly individual and less fruitful. His life, with the shadow which overcasts it, and keeps gradually thickening, is in spite of all more significant than the wholly superficial tranquillity of his mind. The moral figure of Swift is that of an eager demand for truth that destroys one by one all deceitful illusions, and of the suffering which accompanies that destruction. This demand has been carried far in all directions; further, it would seem, than it itself desired to go; further, perhaps, than it was aware of at times.

As a Church dignitary, mixed up in the controversies which separated the Anglicans from the Dissenting sects, and within Anglicanism itself set several tendencies at variance with each other, Swift had to take a side. His career was a choice; he lived and died as Dean of St. Patrick's in Dublin. He wrote numerous religious treatises, which one is usually too much inclined to overlook, besides sermons of a dogmatic, sensible and calm tone; he acquitted himself scrupulously of the duties of his charge, and practised his religion, with more hidden regularity than apparent zeal. He recommends a judicious form of piety; extremes repel him, and his preferences lie in the observance of a golden mean; to follow the religion of the majority of one's com-

patriots, just as to obey the political constitution of one's country, is in Swift's opinion to act as a well-behaved man. He rails against the arguments of the Catholics, the strife and the fanaticism of the various sects; his nature leads him to embrace a doctrine of average reason. But he rebels with all his energy against the ambitious and rational attempt of Deism; he harshly refutes Collins. And in his reaction against the looseness in manners, he goes to the extent of extolling, not without a suspicion of irony, the benefits accruing from a purely exterior and social submission to the attitude of belief, for hypocrisy is, after all, better than cynicism.

This is only a reckless taunt. Despite the "conformism" of his declarations and principles, analogous to that of a Voltaire, Swift stirred up a deep and secret unrest in the minds of those in power during his time, the patrons of Church and State; Queen Anne, above all a devout Churchwoman, refused to recognise his political services in a fitting way; the favourite of a Minister, he did not obtain the Bishopric he believed he could expect; at the critical moments in his life, an unkind Destiny always seemed to baffle his desires; it is with the bitterness of a long series of disappointments that he withdrew from Court intrigues. His great works, those in which his genius is laid bare, terrified or scandalised all orthodoxies; in *A Tale of a Tub*, his religious thought is all instinct with a movement of pitiless negation; and the impulse which carries it on is too strong not to overthrow all the barriers which he himself would like to set up. In the preface which he wrote for this work, Swift is indignant that he should be classed among the Deists by superficial readers. To us of to-day, the error appears very natural. To point out shades and degrees of difference between the sects who contest each other's rights to represent the pure teaching of the Gospel, is to make it possible to select that which is least removed, on an average, from the sacred text; but such a choice is only a makeshift of resignation, the solution of despair; for too startling allegories picture to our eyes the unconscious or intentional work of human instinct, in all ages and in all the churches, bent on deforming, twisting, mutilating, contradicting the letter and the spirit of the admirable and terrible message, beneath which the flesh of man groans and faints.

And not only are all religious organisations built up on half-

conscious acts of cowardice, and the surrender of the highest aspirations of faith; but the very ardour which exalts the most enthusiastic of believers—the Quakers, the Ranters, and those Huguenots, refugees from France, who at this time are making a public show of their convulsions—is bound up with the turbid fermentations of animality. The *Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit* no doubt admits, in passing, that prophetic inspiration can be an immediate gift from the Godhead; but everything encourages the conjecture that this is a purely formal reserve; for an over-zealous spirit in religion, from the orgies of the ancients to the frenzies of the moderns, is traced back with too mercilessly sharp an analysis, too keen an intuition of the deeper link between certain spiritual raptures and erotic moods, to the appetites alone of the flesh. The spirit of this treatise, in its manner of concentrated irony, is that of a modern study of the pathology of mystic states. And with the taste for sound, even if bitter truth, there is mingled in it the keen and secret joy of a moral revenge, the protest of a free mind against conventional lies, even should these lies be sacred.

But the works of Reason are treated with no better respect. *The Battle of the Books* is fired by an anger still aimed at a special object—at certain forms of intellectual ambition and error. Pedanticism, false erudition, rabid controversy, are connected with the thesis of the "Moderns," the insolent, mean enemies of the glory of the Ancients; the despiser of Phalaris, Bentley—who yet was not wrong—is overwhelmed with classical contumely; the verve of this pamphlet, full as it is of allusions to the images and devices of the epic, is another example of the fecundity at this epoch of the mock-heroic theme. *Gulliver's Travels* singularly broadens the indictment of the very effort, by which the human mind claims to know and to understand. Philosophy appears in the light of an ambitious jargon; metaphysics, of a mystification; while theory, that sterile activity, shackles the efficient play of practice in all domains and in a hundred and one different ways. This satiric realism is given free scope in the painting of the illusory kingdom of Laputa. The fever of financial speculation, of rational enquiry and, already, of mechanical progress, which the society of that day freely shows, is presented as the agitated ardour of over-heated brains, in which

are unceasingly hatched all manner of "projects" and inventions; preposterous chimeras.

Swift does not seem to lay any trust in science, either in its present or in its future; he derides equally the erudite inferences of Bentley, and Newton's theory of gravitation; these hypotheses, he holds, are the playthings of thought; fashion upholds them, and then they pass away. Like Samuel Butler, he joylessly witnesses, in the first flush of the modern age, the awakening of the mental unrest, which will produce the scientific conquest of the world; his attention, turned towards the past, is above all aware of the innumerable failures of scholastic charlatanry. The Moderns, according to him, have added nothing which really matters to the sound reasoning of the Ancients. His rational criticism of knowledge has no positive counterpart; it tends to scepticism.

It is less surprising to find only shadows in the image which Swift paints of political institutions and manners. His experience had revealed to him the hidden springs of power, the part played by corruption and intrigue. He writes in the Opposition, under the despised administration of Walpole. Elsewhere, in his didactic treatises, he shows himself alive to the necessity for a strong authority, sustained by the prestige of religion, and in its turn sustaining the spiritual hierarchy. While he has nothing about him of an uncompromising Tory, he is a friend of order. But *Gulliver's Travels* throws the light of a superior and destructive irony upon the smallness of the means, the vanity of the motives, the illusion of the catchwords, through which kings retain their thrones and magistrates their offices; and from one end of society to the other, the fearful influence of man upon man is exercised. It is not only the English political life of his time which he thus dissects; the monarchy itself, the paraphernalia that surround it, the courts and courtiers, the debating assemblies, the struggles of parties, the wiles of the favourites of both sexes—everything upon which, in fact, rests the contemporary administration of Europe—is irremediably damaged by this corrosive satire. To serve the needs of his allegory, and in order to vary the perspective by reversing the scale of his transposition, Swift carries us from the country of the dwarfs to that of the giants; in the former, everything was the grotesque and despicable parody of that human reality which convention invents

with an august prestige; in the latter, it is our reality which reveals itself, directly, as ridiculous and infinitely small. But Brobdingnag and its patriarchal manners are not an ideal seriously proposed to man; this fancy vanishes as soon as one grasps its thin texture; it is only invented to show us better our littleness, to crush us under a sense of our miseries. Whatever the mean chosen for the comparison, mankind cuts a sorry and ugly figure.

The reason is that it is in itself vile and corrupt. In order to realise ever so little the idea of a noble existence, Swift has it that one must forsake the human species. Animal life will supply us with the figures of reasonable beings. In the land of the philosophical horses, we at last come upon something that in the countries known to us we have looked for in vain. When explained to these wise quadrupeds, our civilisation is not intelligible to them; for our perversity surpasses all understanding. And in the lower depths of their civilised society, the ignoble race of the two-footed monsters drags itself along; let us look at it without prejudice, and we shall recognise ourselves. What we call bestiality is the very attribute of man. With relentless cruelty, Swift drives our thought back towards the sordidness of physical existence. Here is an instinctive trend of his attention, almost an obsession of his fancy, of which his poems, like his great allegories, bear the traces, and which has been often connected with the morbid tendencies of his nature. No element in his work is more characteristic; none is better known, this delight in what is foul spreading itself out with cynical frankness on the very surface. In what measure have we here the sign and the germ of a pathological state? Or is it the need for the whole truth, a realism of mind, an ironic lesson of the moralist aimed at the vanities of mankind, a psychological and medical attention to what links up soul and body, or again the lucid, voluntary pessimism of a mind that is resolutely and coolly Christian? Nothing is more difficult than to attempt an exact answer to these questions.

On the other hand, there is among these elements one which dominates too much the others, which emanates too distinctly from all this work like a bitter essence, not to rightly serve to define it: pessimism. Swift does not pass judgment upon the universe or upon the world of man in the absolutely negative way which makes philosophic pessimism; his mind mistrusts gen-

eral affirmations, and at the same time his status as a priest does not permit him, with regard to creation as a whole, to pronounce one of those explicit words of despair which faith reproves. Yet he is intellectually hostile to what exists; and his emotions have a much larger share in his judgments when he condemns than when he accepts reality. His verdict on life is of the psychological and moral order. It bears upon the quality of men in themselves, and upon the use they make of the occasions to act which society offers.

It is in the souls that the evil lies; thence it is that it radiates over all the relations of human beings with one another. This pessimism is so clearly coloured by individual experience, that one has been able to see in it the generalised after-effect of the shocks felt by the sensibility, or more precisely by the ambition of Swift; it is so personal in its expression, that one is tempted to find in it the painful consciousness of an impaired physical and mental health, the echo of inner sufferings which have ended by ruining the balance of a mind. Perhaps there is even at bottom the hidden influence of one of those secret sores of personality, the possible effects of which are revealed to-day by the study of subconscious states.

And yet, Swift has not been always the prey of this bitterness; at least, not to the same degree. His intimate life, and his literary life, both betray moments, or phases, of animation, of expansiveness, almost of gaiety. It is when he comes out of himself, out of his concentrated and solitary meditation, that his thought appears to relax. At the time in which he is wholly engrossed in political strife, from 1710 to 1714, Swift is carried onward by the tide of action. The *Journal to Stella*, a collection of letters in which he jots down familiarly the story of his life for the girl to whom he is attached by an affection that has remained rather mysterious, is one of the most taking documents of its kind; an effusion in which one catches the note of a strange temperament, somewhat ailing; but a note full of playfulness and tender puerilities. Whether it be the bustle of public affairs, or sentiment, which then occupies Swift more, something is lifting him above that fund of aggressive reflection, to which *A Tale of a Tub* already bore witness,

Ireland also saved him at moments from this gnawing disquietude of mind. Deeply moved by the miserable lot of the

country which saw his birth, which he does not look upon as his own, and for which he evinces a somewhat scornful sympathy, he at least knows how to speak out in its favour. He advises the Irish (1720) to reply to the economic pressure of the English by refusing to buy the products of their manufacture. In 1724, he publishes a series of *Letters* (signed "M. B., Drapier"), against the new copper currency which an Englishman had obtained the privilege to strike out, and the weight of which did not correspond with its official value. With an admirable divination of the popular mind, he there wrote a language full of such simple and just sense, and roused so cleverly the mistrust of the practical instinct, that the Government had perforce to yield before a general protest. On this occasion, Swift was the accepted mouthpiece of a people; and he always remained proud of it.

In many subjects, his fertile talent as a polemist was able to expose with clearness and coolness the ideas of a lively and original but balanced judgment. There is in Swift a literary critic, a political writer, a theorist of the rights of the Church. But his work has a physiognomy as a whole; and it is right that its dominant traits should be furnished by the most marked characteristics of his genius. He is above all great by his allegorical invention as applied to satire, by his humour and irony, by the marvellous ease and precision of his style.

Irony and allegory are here fused into one. What is unique, is the suggestive power which radiates from the play of symbolical imagination; and more than in the symbols themselves, more than in the forms chosen to illustrate the theses, the interest here lies in the discovery of these forms, in the act of the mind which chooses them, which loads them with a meaning prodigiously rich and insulting. The apologues on which are founded *A Tale of a Tub* or *The Battle of the Books* have nothing original about them; *Gulliver's Travels* is first of all a novel of adventure and a tale of wonder, and as such is of no more value than many others; the sources utilised by Swift have been discovered or are suspected; in this domain he had a long series of predecessors. But the working out of those data is with him incomparable. The verve, the ingenuity, the concrete invention, which embroider these general themes with uninterrupted variations, give to the least detail a restrained and irresistible eloquence, and store it with a world of allusions; which also render

the supernatural acceptable and normal: such are the elements of an art which Swift carries to the highest degree. And these elements themselves are derived; their common source is a passionate analysis which, with an indefatigable effort, scrutinises reality, at the same time as it judges and condemns it with a harsh and angry feeling. The figured representations among which Swift's satire moves are like an embittered poetry, the value of which lies less in its form, than in the philosophic meaning through which it develops and achieves itself.

An art of implicit expression, contained as to its methods, expansive as to its results, is by its main device closely akin to humour. It has usually been the preference to treat Swift as a master of irony, because his mockery has not the kindly aftertaste which would appear to be, according to some judges, the distinctive note of the humorist. But while his effects are very often more in the nature of irony—which depicts the ideal, and pretends to believe that it is real—they are also very often enlivened by humour—which depicts the real, and pretends to believe that it is ideal. The working of transposition, which is common to them, brings these two literary kinds very close together, and their boundaries are shifting. Swift likes to hover playfully over these limits, and to pass from one domain to the other. He is no less a master in one than in the other. He handles humour in a superior manner because, being keenly alive to all the virtual value of the concrete, to all the reactions which the real sets up in our emotion or in our intelligence, he knows how to evoke it with its crude force, to allow these reactions their widest play, and to efface himself entirely behind the facts he presents to us, enhancing their eloquence with his impassibility The best known piece—the practical, commercial proposition to turn to use the flesh of Irish children as butcher's meat—has all the precision of an estimate and the calm of a financial statement

Thus it is that Swift's style conveys the impression of a tense energy, but one which commands and directs itself. A morbid element may have been found in his thought; his personality is a problem which has not as yet, perhaps, revealed the whole of its secret; it certainly contains both grief and instability, a deep trouble which finally led to madness. But this anguish and this unrest are dominated by the force of an extraordinarily lucid intellect, of a will that knows how to govern passion even when it delivers itself up to it. Upon a temperament that possessed

all the germs of moral incertitude, and which no doubt, in the following century, would have blossomed out into an ardent Romanticism, Swift builds up a work that is wholly classical in its form. The inner tension reveals itself only in the compactness of the expression, in the number of the intentions, in the restrained violence of some effects. Everything is clear in this style, despite the use made of allusion; it is bathed in an intellectual light; everything in it seems sound, normal, self-controlled. It is only in some familiar effusions, such as the *Journal to Stella,* that we meet with the signs of an oddity in the manner of writing and in the terms which is excessive, at times disquieting.

Everywhere else, the language is that of Reason itself, of a Reason that is sensible to reality, nurtured by it, and in no way abstract and dry. Swift possesses the concrete world, knows how to utilise it, and here again he is the humorist. He knows how to employ the racy word, sometimes the coarse word; he frankly collides with the proprieties, or as the case may be, veils the realism of his subjects with ironic periphrases. But the concrete facts of experience, as well as the ideas, the sentiments and the shades of meaning, are wrapped up, harmonised by the limpid flow of the most simple, vigorous and straightforward prose. Each word is in its place, quite naturally; the most fitting word is always chosen, without effort, through an instinct that seems spontaneous. A great variety of tone is obtained by means of a supple adaptation of the language to the theme. If one remembers the extent of Swift's work, the ease with which it passes from the most naïve exposition to the pseudo-epic style, from the weightiest discussion to the freest pleasantry, the fact that the parts of his correspondence which were the most hastily dashed off are still astonishingly spirited and immediately, inevitably clear, one will the better gauge the greatness of the writer.

To be consulted: *Cambridge History of English Literature,* vol. ix. chaps. iv. v. viii. ix. xi. xiii.; vol. x. chap. xv.; Bergson, *Le Rire,* etc., 1900; W. H. Durham, *Critical Essays of the Eighteenth Century, 1700-1725,* 1915; Elton, *The Augustan Ages,* 1899; Farrar, *Critical History of Free Thought,* 1862; Hunt, *Religious Thought in England,* 1892; F. B. Kaye, ed. of Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees,* 1924; Laski, *Political Thought in England from Locke to Bentham,* 1921; Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century,* 1812-15; Paston, *Lady M. W. Montagu and Her Times,* 1907; Pons, *Swift, la Jeunesse, le Conte du Tonneau,* 1925; De Rémusat, *Angleterre au XVIII[e] siècle,* 1856; Rigault, *Histoire de la Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes,* 1859; Robertson, *Short History of Free Thought,* 1906; Saintsbury, *History of Criticism,* 1902; Sichel, *Bolingbroke and His Times,* 1902; Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century,* 1902.

CHAPTER IV

THE LITERATURE OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES

1. *The Middle Classes and the National Temperament.*—In point of time, De Foe, Steele and Addison belong to the very first years of the classical period; it might seem natural to begin the study of it with them. The moral and social tendencies which they represent enter into the very constitution of classicism. But if they are part and parcel of the present, still more do they announce the future. The movement of which they are the heralds appears to adapt itself quite peacefully to the existing frame of literature and society; in fact, it extends beyond this frame, and prepares a vast development which will go on broadening out through the second half of the century. Much more solidly than with Pope and Swift, indeed, De Foe, Addison and Steele are psychologically connected with Richardson, in line with whom they already find themselves; and after Richardson, middle-class literature, of which they mark the advent, will gradually become one of the indirect causes of Romanticism. It is therefore more suitable to place the study of these writers after that of the real leaders of classicism, and in closer union with the signs of moral dissidence which their epoch reveals upon analysis, and which are the origin of another revolution in literature.

If the classical age is of a relatively less pure quality than was that of the Restoration, it is because the social components of the dominant tone are no longer simple. The ruling class is now mixed. It is still built, so to say, upon an aristocratic frame; the prestige of birth is not abolished; high positions and posts are primarily reserved for the ancient families; the court remains crowded with nobles claiming the royal favour. The most refined elements of society, those whose culture is the oldest, continue to be the leaders of fashion and taste. The classical turn of mind, the demand for clear order and a chosen form, the ideal of a studied correctness, are still associated with the culture of elegant sets, whose manners and ideas have received,

during the preceding century, the superficial stamp of French civilisation, and who, through their spontaneous instincts, have found themselves the natural representatives of the swing towards intelligence in the moral rhythm. But since 1688, the upper middle class is more and more commingling with the hereditary nobility, or rising to a position by its side in the state; and without openly demanding the division of power, it is making its individual influence felt. The middle class as a whole—in the sense in which it stretches down to the common people—is not without sharing in this progress. The centre of social gravity tends to shift in the direction of some human elements, whose formation, modern and urban as it is, may receive, for want of a more exact term, the name of "bourgeois." Thus a compromise is established, in which the influences of the middle order of the State are every day becoming more active.

The wealthy merchants, the financiers, of Puritan stock, retain something of their former characteristics. They become more cultured, acquire polish, put up with or accept the tone of the superior class, and under the stimulus of social ambition, try to mix with them, as far as this is possible. But they do not think, do not feel in common with them. Their presence even in the most influential circles diffuses a different magnetism throughout the whole of society, encouraging a fondness for piety, simplicity and sentimental moralism, that for two generations had been repressed by an imperious social and moral reaction. It is in this way that new elements, of a middle-class nature, enter into the psychological and literary atmosphere of the classical age; they bring with them a need for balance and measure, and so seem to lend themselves without effort to the full realisation of its standard; but at the same time they lay germs of difference and disintegration, which will develop with time.

What reappears in this way, within a classicism in which the English instinct does not absolutely recognise itself, is a groundwork of tendencies perhaps more characteristic, and more national. Among the phases of the rhythm through which the genius of a people passes, there is one which seems to correspond better with the most original elements of its nature. It is that which from then onwards in England begins to revive, and its slow return will fill the eighteenth century. It cannot be said,

of course, that Pope as a writer is foreign to his own country. The art of which he is the chief master has been accepted, sought for, demanded by a whole order of civilisation, which is, in the progressive development of his race, a logical and fully normal stage. But with the humble writings of his contemporary De Foe, with the brilliant essays of Steele and Addison, men of letters like himself, associated by the public with his reign and with his glory as a literary lawgiver, it is something contrary, something more truly national which begins again. Certain desires, certain elementary needs of the soul, are more directly satisfied through them. And the new artistic change which from now is preparing will owe to these desires and to these needs the forces which will assure its triumph. Henceforth, England will gradually and dimly tend to reconstruct the unity of its conscious self round the sentimental, sensitive and moral suggestions which come to it from these men, middle-class or mediocre by birth, with whom deep spiritual inclinations have suffered less change than with their predecessors through an artificial and acquired culture.

2. *De Foe.*—One would be tempted, at first acquaintance with De Foe,[1] to see in him an average man, drawing his strength

[1] The life of Daniel De Foe, which is still rather imperfectly known, was so full of varied activities, and of an enormous literary output, that it is impossible to bri[illegible] wo[illegible] ter[illegible] con[illegible] ser[illegible] agent of the minister, Harley; after 1714, he secretly betrayed the Tories to the profit of the Whig Government; meanwhile, he had been subjected to the pillory [illegible] He died in 1731, leaving behind sev[illegible] whose authorship is doubtful. Special [illegible] poetry: *The True-Born Englishman,* [illegible]; in political writing: *The Original* [illegible] *of England,* 1701, among pamphlets. [illegible]2; *The Secret History of the White-* [illegible] *True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs. Veal,* etc., 1706; *A Journal of the Plague Year,* 1722, in history *The* [illegible] *of Public* [illegible] *t Britain,* [illegible] *te English* [illegible] o), in the [illegible] *soe,* 1719, *Captain Singleton,* 1720; *Moll Flanders,* 1722; *Colonel Jacque,* 1722, *Lady Roxana,* 1724; etc. There is no complete edition of his works, for the novels and other tales, see that of Aitken, 1895-6. See the biographies and studies by Lee, *Life and Newly Discovered Writings of De Foe,* 1869; Minto (English Men of Letters), 1879; the chapter on De Foe in the *Cambridge History of English Literature,* vol. ix.; Bernbaum, *The Mary Carleton Narratives,* 1914; Trent, *De Foe and How to*

from the eminent degree in which he represents the mentality of a class. No writer is so definitely, in the domain of literature, the mouthpiece of the commercial middle class of his day. But the slightest reflection shows up the exceptional character of his personality. Enrolled through his instincts in this social category, which he never ceased to serve despite his changeful life and political adventures, he nevertheless rises above it by virtue of the superiority of a prodigious creative vigour.

And yet, the initial impression was not wrong. Of a very marked individuality, and outstanding as he is through the many-sided nature of his talent, De Foe is not as original as he is robust. Leaving aside the immensity of his work, it is possible to study it so as to recognise in it the characteristic traits of the Puritan shopkeepers and tradesmen, who were then profiting from the influence acquired by the big merchants and financiers. Despite his keen desire to rise in the world, he is more noticeably a commoner than either Addison or Steele; he never received a University education; his intellectual outlook is wholly modern, and preserves in contact with reality that freshness of perception, that spontaneous way of looking at things, which one connects with minds of a practical bent. The new and rather hard light which has been thrown upon De Foe by the discoveries relative to his part of secret agent and paid informer, does not detract from his physiognomy that quality of full agreement with the figure of a class; the moral severity of the religious dissenters did not exclude, as a matter of fact, the most supple adaptations to the demands of utility, nor even on occasion all human failings.

Indeed, his works of so diverse a nature can be grouped round a few themes or tendencies. In the discussion of moral and social matters, De Foe for the first time lets us hear the actual voice of the average middle class. He expresses its wishes, the idea it has of itself and of its place in the State; its desire for hierarchy and a just subordination, but also for liberty. *The Complete English Tradesman* destroys, without appearing to do so, the literary privilege which the Restoration had accorded to the circles of the aristocracy; henceforth, the interest of the reading public—however humble and tempered with

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Know Him, 1916; Nicholson, *The Historical Sources of De Foe's Journal of the Plague Year*, 1920; J. Dottin, *Daniel De Foe et ses romans*, 1924; A. W. Secord, *Studies in the Narrative Method of De Foe*, 1924.

humour the development may be—can now be granted to subjects inseparably bound up with trade. *The Complete English Gentleman* gives definite utterance to the essential claim of the tradesman: to attain to culture, and through it to integrate himself in the ruling classes; to sweep away the barrier of refinement, the only one that still bars his progress. This is not to say that De Foe dissociates the envied title of "gentleman" from all material standing; one must have wealth, he holds, when birth is lacking, that one may pretend to it; neither does he demand it for the merchants themselves, in the first generation: their sons and grandsons, when duly educated, will no longer be distinguishable from the descendants of ancient families. De Foe therefore justifies, in principle, what was tending to become a normal reality; the spirit of equality behind his thought is very prudently kept in check. And yet, facts are stronger than all scruples; he has to note the moral corruption of the nobility, and the decline of the ignorant and brutal country gentleman. The future—implicitly—lies with the class that toils, grows rich, and will give itself the prestige of knowledge, if it is cognisant of its genuine interest.

This class is in contact with reality, has a hold over it, and draws therefrom its vigour. Intellectually it is brought up to respect the concrete; its instinct is a whetted desire to seek out the useful. It is unwittingly empirical; if it takes consciousness of what it is doing, and formulates it, then it is rationalistic, without any undue care for system; it inclines to scientific objectivity, as to an end that is rarely reached. De Foe is the most wonderful observer of facts; by means of his imagination he can associate them anew; but he also knows how to subject himself to them, absorb them, reproduce them with a faithfulness that is not entirely passive, for pure passivity would give the impression of the discontinuous; but with that minimum of organisation, of intuitive coherence, which can be learned only from a deep sense of life itself.

It is through this faculty of elementary reconstruction, a half-way stage on the road to invention properly speaking, that one is inclined to explain to-day the tales which De Foe has borrowed from reality, and by a very discreet art has clothed in an atmosphere of verisimilitude, but which after all are no less true. *The Apparition of One Mrs. Veal* is the veracious account of a sup-

posed phantom; *The Storm* describes the real effects of a tempest; *A Journal of the Plague Year* works up authentic testimonies upon the pestilence which visited London. Realism for De Foe is the natural instrument of literature: his novels, in their most imaginative episodes, owe to it their extraordinary solidity of contour: but the whole of his work is full of the rich substance of concrete things. He was daring enough to see the advantages of a modern education, and to claim it for others than the sons of the people; he has grasped the facts of social life, and has described economic reactions; his *Tour through Great Britain* shows an observant, discriminating traveller; his *Augustus Triumphans* is full of the most ingenious suggestions as to the development of societies. For his empiricism advances even to the state of reflective knowledge, and the perception of hidden relations; De Foe not only observes, he analyses, infers, invents.

At the same time, and after the manner of his class, he moralises. The psychological conditions of individual and social well-being, the sentiments and acts which secure balance and success, these to him are privileged facts, essential among all others; not to recall and show them, would be to want in the first duty of a utilitarianism so spontaneous and inevitable, that it cannot be distinguished from good sense. Throughout his long career, and even when his surreptitious doings were not edifying, De Foe's constant desire has been to edify. Numerous among his writings are treatises on practical ethics; and in all are instances of his wish to instruct and to warn. *Robinson Crusoe* would be misunderstood, if one did not see in it above all a demonstration of the part played by Providence in life. *Captain Singleton* is, or claims to be, the account of a conversion. *Religious Courtship* is the handbook of unexceptionable married pairs. Piety tends to become emotional, and a certain sentimentality is in keeping with the tone of souls, as prescribed by the hygiene of experience. De Foe, to be sure, does not overdo pathos; his objectivity in most cases is not without some dryness. The exploits of his buccaneers are narrated with strange impassivity. But when the great themes of life, death, and salvation are evoked, an austere, sober emotion gives dignity to the story. The human drama, in *Robinson Crusoe*, appeals to us; there is here an indissoluble fusion of what is earthly and what is divine.

By these features he is one of a class; by others he is himself. His personality is elusive, and it is with difficulty that one can unite all the expressions of it; there still subsists in it some obscurity. The subconscious victories of utilitarianism over principle do not suffice to explain the broken line of his existence, his changes of opinion, his secret activities; nor do his momentary difficulties justify his superhuman fertility of production. It seems as if Nature, in this exemplar of the middle-class search for balance, had deposited some measure of unsettled psychological disposition, along with that incalculable impulse, the itch and the talent of writing. His political and business life was one of adventure. De Foe, the writer, has not only a matter-of-fact eloquence, ingenuity, and perspicacity; he has not only humour, which implies some self-restraint, a certain dividing, so to say, of the soul; he is at times carried away further than it would be prudent to go by a force of ironical argument equal to that of Swift. *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* is a masterpiece of merciless analysis; here the obscure reactions of dogmatism and intolerance are viewed in so hard a light as to reveal henceforth, and to deprive of the benefit of darkness, the plans for violent repression which the high Anglican Church still fostered, without daring to realise them, or being able to cancel them, without even consenting to confess them to itself. To tear away such a veil is a dangerous deed, and De Foe learned so to his cost. In other circumstances, he abandoned the simple attitude demanded by the solidarity of his class; in the closing years of his life, all parties distrusted him. . . .

This irregular fate is that of an exceptional being. He is great neither by his abstract reasoning, nor by any high artistic conscience; but he has, in addition to the common faculties of the social circle whence he comes, which he possesses in a superior degree, a gift of personal expression, a creative imagination. The poet, in De Foe, is not to be overlooked He belongs to the classical age, in this sense that his lines are thought out and created in the tone of ordinary reflection, raised only by a slightly greater tension of the idea, a more compact form, a more regular rhythm. But he knew how to extract powerful effects from this controversial branch of literature. *The True-Born Englishman* is a satire full of flavour, where racial and family pride is most severely derided; in it the heroic couplet is handled by a plebeian

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rhymester who is not above using doggerel on occasion, but who has read his Dryden, and is not unworthy of the comparison at times. A free and vigorous inspiration, in which the desire for correctness makes itself felt but without being either efficacious or tyrannical, produces here, so to say, a popular classicism.

The novels of adventure which follow one another in close succession and within the space of a few years (1719-24), constitute De Foe's main claim to the quality of a universal writer which time has given him and left him. *Robinson Crusoe* is "classical" in another sense than the poetry of Pope. In these stories we have a triumph of the imagination; but it is still supported by facts; the shipwreck of Selkirk is at the source of *Robinson Crusoe; Captain Singleton* and *Moll Flanders* have as a real background accounts of travels, the vague but suggestive geography of the time, the memoirs and biographies of loose women and criminals. De Foe applies instinctively the documentary method; his greedy curiosity is for ever assimilating, and he allows his various memories to live, organise themselves, and grow according to their own powers. Of some of his novels it has been possible to wonder whether they might not be historical works, as the *Memoirs of a Cavalier;* the *Journal of the Plague Year,* compiled from texts, has been looked upon as purely a novel.

However "real," and derived from experience, the materials of a work may be, a moment comes when they have to be subjected to the law of a new construction. Invention, with De Foe, is remarkable for the extreme resemblance of its products with the actual combinations of things. His imagination works in the direction of reality because he is full of it, and has assimilated its deeper habits, its laws, and so to speak its obscure will; on the other hand, the pictures he draws have all the solid relief of facts, because his look always absorbs the qualities of what he sees, so that his mere visions naturally partake of the characters of his sensations. This force of mental realism destroys the very principle of realism; the visionary in De Foe only further develops the practical middle-class citizen.

In this way the startling truth of the largely imaginary adventures of a Robinson Crusoe has given successive generations the most concrete picture of the struggle of a man against Nature. Such a subject appealed to ancient and universal emotions, to perhaps the most specifically human interest that literature has to

offer; without deliberately wishing to do so, but through his intuitive instinct of life, De Foe has written not only the instructive story of the perils which befall a frail humanity preserved by supernatural aid, but the symbolical *drama of the painful, patient* effort by which civilisation has come into being.

There is a writer in De Foe, since there is a vigorous mind that sees and knows how to picture up its visions by means of words. Without being an artist in the proper sense, he has also artistic merits. He is clear, as the activity of his mind is clear; his language is concrete, like his thought; but one feels that his handling of certain devices is too skilful not to be voluntary, and *not to reveal the pleasure he himself finds in them.* The racy flavour, the expressive power of his style, the humour which he imparts to it, are the gifts of a writer abounding in a still popular sap, *conscious enough to be able to put this resource to its fullest* use, and wise enough not to impair it by attempting effects of another kind.

3. *Steele and Addison.*—Addison and Steele are inseparable. Their temperaments offer more opposition than harmony; their respective works are in great part independent. But their names have been associated in a literary and moral undertaking too significant, too closely bound up with the social needs of the time, not to give a centre, as it were, to their literary careers. The *Spectator* is the supreme expression of middle-class literature in the plane of a fully accepted classicism; and Steele and Addison remain first and foremost the authors of the *Spectator.*

Steele[1] is not entirely, like Addison, a man of his time. By some traits of his figure, he recalls the care-free graces of the Restoration; by *others, and probably the most characteristic,* he announces the effusions, the display of self, the ethics of sensi-

[1] Richard Steele, born in Dublin, in 1672, of middle-class family (his father was a [illegible] chose a military career, and *led a care-free, dissipated life during* [illegible] serious, [illegible] *edifying* [illegible] ow, chap. v); always pressed for money, he turned to [illegible] founded *The Tatler*, in which he had the frequent collaboration of Addison; the latter took a predominant share in the management of *The Spectator* (1st March, 1711, to 6th Dec., 1712). Steele next wrote numerous *political pamphlets*, launched *several* periodicals, among them *The Guardian* (1713), *The Englishman*, and *The Lover;* returned to the theatre, *and died in 1729. The Tatler*, ed. by Aitken, 1898-99; for *The Spectator*, see Addison; *Select Essays*, ed. by L. E. Steele, 1907; for the *theatre, see chap. v.* See biography by Aitken, 1889; study by Dobson (English Writers), 1888.

rhymester who is not above using doggerel on occasion, but who has read his Dryden, and is not unworthy of the comparison at times. A free and vigorous inspiration, in which the desire for correctness makes itself felt but without being either efficacious or tyrannical, produces here, so to say, a popular classicism.

The novels of adventure which follow one another in close succession and within the space of a few years (1719-24), constitute De Foe's main claim to the quality of a universal writer which time has given him and left him. *Robinson Crusoe* is "classical" in another sense than the poetry of Pope. In these stories we have a triumph of the imagination; but it is still supported by facts; the shipwreck of Selkirk is at the source of *Robinson Crusoe; Captain Singleton* and *Moll Flanders* have as a real background accounts of travels, the vague but suggestive geography of the time, the memoirs and biographies of loose women and criminals. De Foe applies instinctively the documentary method; his greedy curiosity is for ever assimilating, and he allows his various memories to live, organise themselves, and grow according to their own powers. Of some of his novels it has been possible to wonder whether they might not be historical works, as the *Memoirs of a Cavalier;* the *Journal of the Plague Year,* compiled from texts, has been looked upon as purely a novel.

However "real," and derived from experience, the materials of a work may be, a moment comes when they have to be subjected to the law of a new construction. Invention, with De Foe, is remarkable for the extreme resemblance of its products with the actual combinations of things. His imagination works in the direction of reality because he is full of it, and has assimilated its deeper habits, its laws, and so to speak its obscure will; on the other hand, the pictures he draws have all the solid relief of facts, because his look always absorbs the qualities of what he sees, so that his mere visions naturally partake of the characters of his sensations. This force of mental realism destroys the very principle of realism; the visionary in De Foe only further develops the practical middle-class citizen.

In this way the startling truth of the largely imaginary adventures of a Robinson Crusoe has given successive generations the most concrete picture of the struggle of a man against Nature. Such a subject appealed to ancient and universal emotions, to perhaps the most specifically human interest that literature has to

offer; without deliberately wishing to do so, but through his intuitive instinct of life, De Foe has written not only the instructive story of the perils which befall a frail humanity preserved by supernatural aid, but the symbolical drama of the painful, patient effort by which civilisation has come into being.

There is a writer in De Foe, since there is a vigorous mind that sees and knows how to picture up its visions by means of words. Without being an artist in the proper sense, he has also artistic merits. He is clear, as the activity of his mind is clear; his language is concrete, like his thought; but one feels that his handling of certain devices is too skilful not to be voluntary, and not to reveal the pleasure he himself finds in them. The racy flavour, the expressive power of his style, the humour which he imparts to it, are the gifts of a writer abounding in a still popular sap, conscious enough to be able to put this resource to its fullest use, and wise enough not to impair it by attempting effects of another kind.

3. *Steele and Addison.*—Addison and Steele are inseparable. Their temperaments offer more opposition than harmony; their respective works are in great part independent. But their names have been associated in a literary and moral undertaking too significant, too closely bound up with the social needs of the time, not to give a centre, as it were, to their literary careers. The *Spectator* is the supreme expression of middle-class literature in the plane of a fully accepted classicism; and Steele and Addison remain first and foremost the authors of the *Spectator.*

Steele[1] is not entirely, like Addison, a man of his time. By some traits of his figure, he recalls the care-free graces of the Restoration; by others, and probably the most characteristic, he announces the effusions, the display of self, the ethics of sensi-

[1] Richard Steele, born in Dublin, in 1672, of middle-class family (his father was an attorney), chose a military career, and led a care-free, dissipated life during his early years; about 1700 he began to take an interest in things morally serious, although his life did not reflect any great change, he published in 1701 an edifying treatise, *The Christian Hero,* then wrote sentimental comedies (see below, chap. v.); always pressed for money, he turned to periodical literature, and founded *The Tatler,* in which he had the frequent collaboration of Addison; the latter took a predominant share in the management of *The Spectator* (1st March, 1711, to 6th Dec., 1712). Steele next wrote numerous political pamphlets, launched several periodicals, among them *The Guardian* (1713), *The Englishman,* and *The Lover;* returned to the theatre, and died in 1729 *The Tatler,* ed. by Aitken, 1898-99; for *The Spectator,* see Addison; *Select Essays,* ed. by L. E. Steele, 1907, for the theatre, see chap. v. See biography by Aitken, 1889, study by Dobson (English Writers), 1888.

bility, which the eighteenth century will make fashionable. He is a classicist only by accident and opportunity. His thought is naturally clear; he possesses a certain faculty for composition, the gift of delicacy and fine shading; but the secret ideal he pursues is that of a pleasant negligence; his form is less laboured, less careful than it is spontaneous; the disciplined art of his best pages owes much to the example of Addison.

A fertile mind, a generous personality, attractive even in its weaknesses, Steele draws to himself sympathies that his friend of a colder and more conscious nature repels. His literary initiative has been sometimes honoured more than it deserves. Though in the creation of an original variety of essay he has played a decisive part, he alone, or even more especially he, cannot be credited with having brought it to the degree of perfection it attained. He has his charming felicities; but the art of Addison has a finished distinction, of a more even, more sober and more secure effect.

The Christian Hero is the most significant of confessions. Steele expresses therein without knowing it the deep-rooted demand which the middle classes laid down as a condition of their rallying to the doctrine of the classicists. Classicism to them is acceptable only if it is moral. To the pagan traditions therefore will have to be added the spirit of Christianity, as interpreted by the Puritan conscience. The wisdom of the Stoics, declares Steele, is not enough to live and die; the virtue of antiquity can retain its hold over the imagination, but the realities of conduct escape it; only the lessons of Christ can awaken in souls a spirituality capable of sustaining that courageous independence towards the world where true heroism is known. The needs of moral regularity, of idealism, of feeling—such are the tendencies which the middle classes bring to that transposed expression of the inner life out of which literature is made. To them it will often be only a convention, as Steele himself did not remain on the level of the precepts he laid down; but, henceforth, conscience will find a necessary tranquillity in the official sway of these rules, even when they are not strictly observed in practice. Through them the tone of social life will be gradually altered.

The *Tatler* is the individual work of Steele. It appeared thrice weekly, and preserved the features of periodicals given over to general information, such as the *Athenian Mercury* of

Dunton, and the *Review* of De Foe.[1] Each number treats of several themes, and allots special headings to literary and political news. But Steele soon discovers the task to which his surest instinct inclines him: the reform of manners. He borrows from Swift the comic figure of Isaac Bickerstaff, astrologer and magician, a clever diviner of the private secrets of his fellow-beings; and in a series of imaginary portraits, which conceal real originals, he undertakes to bring to the notice of the public and of the guilty people themselves the errors of vanity, egoism, and extravagance which disturb the pleasant and decorous order of social intercourse. The work thus begun is somewhat analogous to that which the "salons" and circles of the "précieuses" had accomplished in France during the seventeenth century; it represents a victory of culture over the rough, uncouth excesses of too individualistic a civilisation. The crusade of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* comes much later than that of the Hôtel de Rambouillet; it is instinct with a middle-class and not an aristocratic spirit; again, it does not tend above all towards the refinement of language and thought, but towards the purification of manners and human relations. It is none the less, at bottom, of a parallel intent, and equally constitutes an action of the intellectual élite upon the life of the cultured circles; it is an English, and so more moralising, counterpart of the same movement.

In England the coffee-houses replace the "salons." They play a part of the same order, in a relative sense. They offer to a class, the social influence of which tends to increase, the material means to come together, to define its tastes and to take stock of them. Here it is that public affairs, literary news, fashions, scandals, are discussed; an average opinion is created, and formulated; it is already, in certain essential elements, the middle-class opinion which will hold undisputed sway in the nineteenth century. As yet it is not bold enough to impose its own influence. It aims at a compromise between the aristocratic temper of moral freedom, which the Restoration had carried to a licentious excess, and the Puritan spirit, which the excesses of the Commonwealth had brought into disrepute. The task of Steele and Addison is to

[1] For the beginnings of the press and periodic publications in England in the [illegible]

motives. The art of living together, the duties of family life, the rules of true gallantry, the status and part of women in society, the laws governing the toilet, amusements and reading, such are the subjects touched upon by this universal adviser, who passes from the most serious matters to the slightest; and conducts a crusade against duelling in the midst of jokes aimed at extravagant head-dresses.

Such studies in manners almost of necessity tend to find a definite support in a series of individual sketches; of these again, some will stand out from the others, and acquire a superior consistency. It has been possible to say that the *Spectator* shows a *premonition of the fortune that was soon to accrue to the novel* of moral observation. Like the *Tatler,* it shows us a club of original figures; but in this case the types are developed, individual at once, and coloured with one and the same genial humanity. Among them, Sir Roger de Coverley, an idealised country gentleman, of softened characteristics, is a personage living enough to have taken his place amongst the best known creations in literature. The outline of this figure, traced out by Steele, is filled in by Addison with delicate touches; it is bathed in a light of indulgent irony which gives it a family likeness to the delightful, smiling portraits by means of which Dickens, with an art that is richer but not finer, will suggest his instinctive philosophy of cordiality. The group of which he is the centre forms with him a discreetly idyllic picture of English society; and as Addison preaches the reciprocal goodwill of classes, the toning down of party rivalry, he does show some preference for the representative of the trading upper middle class, Sir Andrew Freeport, the symbol of the new order of things, but he borrows an element of the social virtue which he teaches from the patriarchal spirit of old agricultural England.

Such is the double movement animating the doctrine in action, which the *Spectator* practically is: in its effort to diffuse a moral tone of which the growing middle classes are the principal source, its bent is towards the future of national life as of literature; but, in so far as it tries, underneath a gap, an aristocratic and dryly intellectual period, to link up again the continuity of a broader personality, and of this national life itself, its trend is towards the past.

Moralising sentiment here already reveals the directions in

which it will influence the tastes of the public and of writers; it tends to lead them back to simple, popular and emotional values; to the great expressions of a poetic temperament formerly sovereign, but now in disfavour. The return to Shakespeare and Milton, which is perceptible on every side, is confirmed in the *Spectator;* and the essays of Addison on *Paradise Lost,* though one must not exaggerate the novelty of their appearance at this date, have done much to establish the place of this recent English work in a hierarchy, the only principle of which at this epoch is furnished by classical tradition. Addison's criticism still strives, and not without reason, to ruin the shaken prestige of the "conceits" and falsely elegant turns which classicism for two generations now has been opposing, but which, through an inevitable confusion, its cult of verbal perfection has sometimes seemed to encourage. Addison reaches the extreme limit of his audacity when he praises the naïve or pathetic charm of old-time ballads, such as *Chevy Chase,* or *The Children in the Wood,* and thus stimulates the timid partiality of his middle-class readers for these spontaneous fruits of national genius, though he thinks it necessary to justify their taste by parallels borrowed from ancient literatures.

The variety of the subjects, a supple adaptation to the preferences of the public, and at the same time a sufficiently skilful reaction aganist certain habits, certain defects, to call into play the deeper resolutions of a society bent on disciplining and correcting itself, as to superficial habits of selfishness; a gift for the concrete illustration of themes, a gallery of original portraits, a broad outlook upon social realities, with nothing that recalls the open struggles of interests; a harmony with an obscure instinct of middle-class minds, which urges them towards the affirmation of more national ways of living and feeling—such are the major reasons for the success of the *Spectator.* But a finished literary art also contributes its share.

These minute, carefully executed sketches, form a series of vignettes in which each has its own individual worth, while all gain an added value through their grouping. In them the essay attains one of its perfect forms; a short-lived perfection, in keeping with an age when, on the one hand, the number of readers is increasing, when modern journalism comes into existence, and when serious themes can already be treated so as to suit the rapid

attention that will be bestowed upon them; when, on the other hand, reading remains enough of a privilege, when the reader's mind still lends itself readily enough, and moral themes keep enough of their prestige, for reflections of a didactic nature to be willingly listened to, and the artistic care bestowed upon them not to seem out of place. There is here a just balance that is for once established, but which, in this literary kind, will not again be found. The *Essays of Elia,* in the following century, will be an equally successful achievement, but a different one.

It is fair to trace to Addison the most solid merits of these little masterpieces, in which Steele has a substantial share. Addison possesses a firmer sense of composition, a more compact style; the quality of his prose is more equal; and it is under his guidance that Steele seems to have regularised an often delightful, but diffuse verve. With the chosen proportion of the whole, the simple elegance, the distinguished ease of a language that benefits without effort by all the progress of classical prose, one must above all praise the gift for expressing shades and conveying hints, and the delicacy of the suggestions. These half-tones suit the aim of papers which, though playful, are often concerned with manners, and implicitly follow the model of fashionable conversation; they are also in keeping with a discreet form of sermonizing; lastly, they supply the matter, the usual means for a sly spirit of comedy, a humour, which, emanating from a general attitude of the thought, radiates over everything which that thought touches upon, without however translating itself, most often, into the words, by anything else than a delicately significant inflection of the feeling of their value, which presides over their choice.

Addison died young, and these modest essays remain the masterwork of his life. The triumphal success of his *Cato* was due to the rivalry of the political parties, which both wanted to find favourable allusions in it. His comedy, *The Drummer,* owed its failure no doubt, as has often been said, to the lack of dramatic power; but it is a pretty piece of work, not wanting in observation; the dialogue has almost the finesse of Congreve, and although less brilliant is more natural. Addison would have left behind the memory of a wholly charming and attractive personality, had not Pope, full of the resentment of an estranged and embittered friendship, published after his death that terrible



A scene from Addison's "Cato." From an old engraving.

pen-portrait of *Atticus*,[1] which, with such cruel shrewdness, brings to light the under side of a saint's effigy. It may be said of this interpretation that it is admirably penetrating, and nevertheless unjust; the figure which it builds up systematises latent possibilities which a character of strong will has neutralised in itself, without being able to destroy them, and the existence of which, entirely subconscious and dim, is only visible to a hostile and keen sight. Addison does not seem to have been innocent of an instinctive jealousy towards Pope; but Pope's wrongdoing with regard to him was more conspicuous.

4. *The Middle-Class Spirit and the Drama; First Symptoms.* —Addison was too much imbued with the classical tradition, not to allow it to dominate him when he came to write a tragedy. Within his own life-time, the change of atmosphere due to the news [illegible] spirit [illegible] suffici [illegible] begin [illegible] those of Young can be placed by the side of the literary compromises at which the inspiration of the middle class had stopped in the *Spectator.*

They are interesting symptoms, but little else. Already in the work of Dryden himself, as in that of Otway and Lee, there was to be seen the survival of the seeds of emotion and art, the spontaneous flowering of which had been the free tragedy of the Elizabethans. Rowe[2] goes no further, even if there is a clearer consciousness in his return to the past. *The Fair Penitent* and *Jane Shore* are transitional plays; but despite the bloody fury of the first, despite the wholly exterior imitation of Shakespeare's style in the second—which has its sober moments and a certain powerfulness—one cannot see in it anything that really eludes the essential customs of classicism. The interest of these works lies rather in the fact that they testify to the evolution of public taste; and this taste, while it returns with fondness to the memories of the Renaissance theatre, tends in reality towards a

[1] *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, 1735; the portrait had been written at an earlier date.

[2] Nicholas Rowe, 1674-1718, staged *The Fair Penitent* in 1703, *Jane Shore* in 1714 (edn. Hart, Belles-Lettres Series, 1907). In 1709 he published an edition of Shakespeare, carefully compiled, and with notes on the poet's life, which he had collected from oral tradition.

moralising sentimentalism. Rowe is half-way to the domestic drama which Lillo will bring to its full realisation.

Young's [1] tragedies are a striking symptom of the inward movement of minds. Here we have a writer whose education was wholly classical, and in whom the national instinct is now awakening; he strives after energy, liberty of expression, only to attain to violence and bombast. But the intention, the desire behind such work create an appreciable difference between these plays and those of Thomson, for example, whose *Sophonisba* [2] is cast in the mould of pure convention, and has more unity, but still less relief.

To be consulted: Aitken, *Life of Steele*, 1889; Ashton, *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*, 1883; Beljame (title quoted); *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. viii. chaps. vi. and vii., vol. ix. chaps. i. and ii.; Dennis, *Studies in English Literature*, 1883; P. Dottin, *Daniel De Foe et ses romans*, 1924; Gosse, *A History of Eighteenth Century Literature*, 1887; J. W. Krutch, *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration*, 1926; Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vols. i. and ii., 1878-90; Lewis, *The Advertisements of the Spectator*, 1909; G. S. Marr, *The Periodical Essayists of the Eighteenth Century*, 1924; Morgan, *The Rise of the Novel of Manners*, 1911; A. Nicoll, *History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama, 1700-1750*, 1925; Perry, *English Literature in the Eighteenth Century*, 1883; J. G. Robertson, *Studies in the Genesis of Romantic Theory in the Eighteenth Century*, 1923; Tupper, *Representative English Dramas from Dryden to Sheridan*; Ward, *History of English Dramatic Literature*, vol. iii., 1899.

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[1] Edward Young staged his *Busiris* in 1719, *The Revenge* in 1721. See Thomas, *Le Poète Edward Young*, 1901; 2nd part, chap. iii. For the poetic work of Young, see below, Book III. chap. ii.

[2] 1730. See Book III. chap. ii.

Read

CHAPTER V

THE DAWN OF SENTIMENTALISM IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

1. *Diverging Inspirations*—With the controversialists of thought, the opening years of the eighteenth century appeared to be absorbed by a vast endeavour of analysis and criticism With the middle-class writers, on the contrary, there is visible a more or less conscious searching after the positive solutions, which the practical tendencies of the citizen demand. These solutions are instinctively sought in a return to the concrete, in a firmer grasp of actual things, the expression of which is realism; in a moral reform of individual life, in a more cordial good-fellowship; and behind these diverse aspirations, it is sentiment that we see or divine; it is a deep and hidden movement of the inner rhythm, the working of which is made easier by the progress of the middle classes. But with these writers, sentiment is still restrained, and fused with other tendencies; it hardly justifies itself definitely; and the significance of the moral changes which take place can pass unnoticed.

Some of their contemporaries allow one better to appreciate the nature and the trend of this same movement; either because their thought, having a philosophical character, shows more clearly and more precisely its lines of development; or because their temperament offers less resistance to the appeal of sentimental inspiration.

Under the heading "the literature of sentiment," it is the dissident writers of the classical age that one must study. Their dissidence, however, is not hard and fast. They show, most often, a compromise with the dominant influences of their time.

Thus only a difference of degree separates them from the elements of moral variation, which were to be found even in the greatest representatives of classicism.

It is possible and useful, nevertheless, to classify them as a separate group. With them, the new background of impulse

becomes characteristic. However tempered it may be by its combination with orthodox motives, or by the conformity of its expression with the standards of classical art, it comes out through the whole personality of the writer. This personality reveals another moral ideal, that is to say, another literary ideal as well.

The present chapter is inseparable from the preceding one; it is the continuation and natural development of it. The work of one writer—Steele—is divided between both. Sentimental comedy is the earliest artistic expression of the silent transformation of public taste.

2. *Philosophy and Mysticism; Berkeley, Shaftesbury, Law, etc.*—The philosophy of this period is not entirely rational. The temperaments of several among its most original thinkers are modified by a strong admixture of different tendencies.

Berkeley's idealism [1] is, above all, a metaphysical theory; if he denies the actual existence of matter, he proceeds not by intuition, but by reasoning, and demonstrates his thesis in conformity with the strictest logic. But at the origin of the doctrine there is certainly a deep prepossession, of a religious and moral nature; his very intelligence is impassioned; and the character of the man is all lit up with the warm radiance of a sentimental and humanitarian zeal.

His life, his doings, his occasional writings, bear the traces of it. A lofty, generous nature, he sacrifices everything for a sort of civilising crusade, a far-off chimera, which makes him one of the intellectual pioneers of America. The natural scenery of the New World strikes his imagination, as before he had admired that of Italy, and he celebrates it in verse. As early as 1721, he draws up the plan of a kind of national regeneration, which he deems necessary in order to quicken the conscience of an impious and corrupt age.[2] He has a high notion of his episcopal duties,

[1] George Berkeley, 1685-1753, born in Ireland, was connected with Trinity College, Dublin, then travelled on the Continent, and formed the project of evangelising the American Indians and reforming the manners of the whites; after the failure of his enterprise, he became Bishop of Cloyne, and interested himself philanthropically in social problems. His philosophical writings form two groups: *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, 1709; *Principles of Human Knowledge*, 1710; *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, 1713 (first group); *Alciphron*, 1732; *Theory of Vision*, 1733; *Siris*, 1744 (second group). *Works*, ed. by Fraser, 1901. See Lyon, *L'Idéalisme en Angleterre au XVIII[e] siècle*, 1888; Johnston, *Development of Berkeley's Philosophy*, 1923.

[2] *An Essay towards Preventing the Ruin of Great Britain.*

and deems it a part of them to concern himself with social reforms. Pope, who was not lavish of such praise, granted him "every virtue."

His clear prose, of a perfect simplicity and ease in the explanation of subtle theories, has, especially in his *Dialogues*, a charm that is almost Greek. There is a wholly classical intellectualism in the rigour of his philosophy of "ideas," which turns the data of experience, for each individual, into a system of signs, a divine language, presented to our consciousness by an external and omnipresent Spirit. The idealistic preoccupations—in the emotional sense—which bend this doctrine towards a kind of enthusiastic paradox, are not at first revealed in the unfolding of its quite audacity.[1]

But with the passing of years, Berkeley's thought draws nearer Plato, and becomes impregnated with a more obvious mysticism. The aroma of his personality is felt more distinctly in that strange work *Siris*, where the progress of mind along the chain of existence, from the most humble physical properties even to spiritual virtues, traces the stages of actual divine emanation; and where the deciphering of the universe is guided by the intuitive effort of the imagination. It is in a Christian but at the same time pantheistic philosophy that this remarkable thinker completes his progressive development; and starting from Locke, he finally joins the Platonic tradition, so living a force in England since the Renascence, and which the age of dominant Reason had almost entirely interrupted.

The link with Locke, and the divergence of opinion with him, are not less marked in Shaftesbury.[2] He is his pupil, and in a sense continues his thought; he protects Toland; his religious opinions make him regarded, and not without cause, as one of the Deists; his *Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* (1708) gives vent

[1] The work of John Norris served as a link between Berkeley and Malebranche, the latter of whom was adapted by Norris in his *Essay towards the Theory of an Ideal of the Intelligible World*, 1701-4.

[2] Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, grandson of the minister of Charles II, was born in 1671, and had Locke for a tutor; of delicate health, he [illegible] His *Characteristics of* [illegible] 1713), was a collec- [illegible] Ed by Robertson, [illegible] ler, *Shaftesbury and* [illegible] *al Poets in England* (Publ. of Mod. Lang. Assoc. of America), 1916; E. Tiffany, *Shaftesbury as Stoic* (idem), 1923.

to the irony of an aristocratic intellect when confronted with the coarse intolerant zeal of a popular fanaticism. His attitude is that of an enlightened, detached onlooker; the eighteenth century will see many of these courteous, sceptical observers, and it is amongst them that the classical temperament, in its lucid and arid form, will best perpetuate itself.

But Shaftesbury, in other respects, figures as an apostle. His favourite masters are the Stoics, and Plato; he reconciles them with a Christianity that is broad and coloured by an eclectic idealism. He has the tastes, and often the conduct, of a philanthropist; he goes very far along the path of tolerance, and claims with generous ardour the absolute liberty of opinion. Above all, his thought reveals intuitive and sentimental tendencies. He reacts with all his strength against the utilitarian theory of ethics, and on this point dissociates himself very clearly from Locke. His doctrine emphasises the naturally altruistic instincts of human nature; our affections, he holds, bring us to desire the happiness of others, and a rule of life can thus be framed upon the balancing of egoism and the gift of self. Conscience will have as a guide, in this delicate fusion, a superior intuitiveness, which will immediately distinguish what is good and what is evil. This infallible "moral sense" is only one aspect of the æsthetic sense, which perceives the beauty of things. For creation is a universal harmony. . . .

This theory of the perfection of the universe has had its echo in the pantheistic optimism of the *Essay of Man*, from which Pope drew happy inspirations. As he expounds it, Shaftesbury's prose warms up to a lyric eloquence which has been charged, not unduly, with an elaborate and artificial distinction, but which possesses, nevertheless, an indisputably contagious virtue. This critic of enthusiasm, who is also in another sense its defender, is an enraptured lover of all that is sublime in the world, of the overpowering harmony between our emotions and the scenes of nature; and as by the effusions of his faith in the goodness of man he announces Rousseau, so not a few of his pages are already—in every respect save the language—those of a Romanticist. His very wide influence throughout Europe is an element in the international contagion of sensibility as a philosophical principle.

For long, Shaftesbury was not given his true place in the his-

tory of ideas. This unjust forgetfulness has since been amended. The quality of his moral personality is noble; his thought is actuated by a passion which excludes neither lucidity, nor yet the most genuine and heartfelt tolerance. Intellectually he has been a fruitful force. His work is rich in ideas, the formulæ of which have been outstepped by the modern conception of ethics, but not perhaps in the sphere of creative impulse. Whatever may be the weak points of his doctrine, it cannot be denied that in an epoch of dry matter-of-fact thinking he soothed the imagination of his readers with a music which appealed to the emotions, and which set vibrating the presageful echo of future voices.

His disciple, Hutcheson,[1] systematises his theory of the moral sense. On the other hand, he grants to the exercise of this instinct a sanction in the nature of a pleasure; thus, virtue coincides with the pleasurable effusion of a goodliness which finds its happiness in that of others. Duty, therefore, tends to merge in the search after a common good, and utilitarian ethics, against *the egoistical form of which Shaftesbury had reacted, again* become the end towards which the spontaneous movement of English thought is tending.

Meanwhile, the truly mystical inspiration is concentrated in some isolated thinkers, who give expression in literature to the still intense religious fervour of certain sects. William Law[2] is the most eminent figure in this group, whose secret action at the heart of an age of Reason must not be overlooked. He forms the connecting link between the vast Puritan movement in the seventeenth century, and the Methodist Revival of the eighteenth.

The *Serious Call* is one of those books which, for two centuries, have been handed down from generation to generation by a middle class ever intent on the reading of pious works. It must not be confounded with the average edifying and mediocre tract. Despite its prolixity and repetition, the merit of the work lies in the cogency and wealth of its logic, in the construction of

[1] Francis Hutcheson, 1694-1746, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow, published *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, 1725, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections*, etc., 1726. His *System of Moral Philosophy* (1755) appeared after his death. See Scott, *Hutcheson*, 1900.

[2] William Law, 1686-1761; *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, 1728; *The Case of Reason*, 1731; *An Appeal to All that Doubt*, 1740; *The Way to Divine Knowledge*, 1752. *Serious Call*, ed. by Overton, 1898; see Overton, *W. Law, Nonjuror and Mystic*, 1881.

the development, and in the nervous style. Its rhetoric, at times a trifle luxuriant, is wholly classical, but is fanned into flame by an inward zeal which tends, as a natural end, to the mystic union with God. Above all, the passion of an uncompromising Christianity denounces all the pleasing foibles, the indulgent weaknesses of the world; it refutes the arguments of lukewarmness and compromise; it will have the whole soul, and claim it unreservedly for the all-absorbing practice of faith.

The other and less well-known works of Law give definite shape to his intellectual adhesion to mysticism. *The Case of Reason* refutes Tindal in attacking what is the essential principle of Deism—the possibility for the human mind of knowing with certitude the attributes of the Divine, and the general plan of creation. Assigning to Reason its limits, it is the very foundation of belief on which classicism is built that Law is putting to the test. Later, he becomes impregnated with the influence of Jacob Boehme, and *The Way to Divine Knowledge* expounds, in a style that is always controlled but at the same time inspired, the conditions and stages in the reunion of the soul with God, that is to say, in the return of the part to the whole whence it emanates.

Law is a direct predecessor of John Wesley. He foreshadows the religious revival which will be one of the moral preparations towards the renewing of literature.

3. *Poetry; Lady Winchilsea, Watts.*—The poetry of this age has isolated notes which pure classicism cannot explain. Outside of these scattered elements, there are a few poetic temperaments in which an inspiration of a clearly different character is concentrated. In Thomson, as early as 1726,[1] the feeling for Nature assumes the importance of a central, privileged theme. But Thomson is one of a numerous group of descriptive poets, each of whom forms a stage in a long transition, throughout the course of the century; he must not, therefore, be separated from them.

The deep continuity of the current of imaginative emotion which has dried up on the surface, in literature, but which persists in the subconsciousness of many, and preserves an active if not æsthetic force in the moral life of numerous groups, is already revealed in the natural instincts of some dissident personalities,

[1] The first of the *Seasons*, *Winter*, appeared in 1726.

during the first years of the century. Lady Winchilsea,[1] after having written a pindaric poem in keeping with the taste of the day, abandons herself to the direct suggestion of simple things—a tree, the song of the nightingale, the peace of evening; she describes the veiled splendour of the landscape, the reflection of the moon and of the stirring leaves upon the waters, the mysterious majesty of ruins, and even to the shiver of fear which the silent approach of a horse calls forth when the pasture deadens the sound of its hoofs; out of all these fugitive emotions, she feels that a brooding mood is being formed, too full and fraught with meaning to be expressed in words; and her *Nocturnal Reverie* is thus one of the most impressive paradoxes in the history of literature, striking as it does, at this date, the very modern note of a Romanticism in which Wordsworth, a century later, will recognise his own.

With Isaac Watts,[2] one touches the link between the spiritual fervour of a still active though latent religious life, and the possible renovation of poetry. The contemporary of Law, Watts gives expression in verse to a faith that is less mystical but as ardently sincere; something of this ardour animates and raises his lyrical effusions, without succeeding, however, in melting the cold surface of a rather artificial language. But while he is not a renovator of form, he owes it to the truth of his inspiration that he has written songs which pious English souls have never since forgotten. Among attempts of very unequal value, spoiled in many places by the abuse of classical convention, and despite the rigour of an austere Puritanism, he has known how to reconcile zeal with an earnest simplicity in tones of moving appeal. His *Divine Songs for Children* have lines which make one think of Blake; and this instinctive effort of adaptation leads him, at least, to seek rhythms which are freer, and sometimes happily successful; one of these is his blank verse, which through the analogy of the sentiment as of the measure is not unlike that of Cowper.

4. *The Beginnings of Sentimental Comedy; Cibber, Steele.*—It is in the theatre that sensibility finds the largest scope. The new public, with whom middle-class influences tend to play a

[1] 1660-1720 *The Spleen*, 1701; *Miscellany Poems*, 1713.

[2] 1674-1748; a dissenting minister, preacher and poet; *Horæ Lyricæ*, 1706; *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, 1707; *Divine Songs for Children*, 1715, *Psalms of David Imitated*, 1719.

dominant part, here exercises an action more quickly appreciable than elsewhere; it begins to transform comedy, where the aristocratic spirit of the Restoration had for long prevailed. The initiative of Colley Cibber, then that of Steele, answer to the latent needs of audiences to whom the sorry plight—cynically presented—of merchants made butts of by young fashionable noblemen, no longer offers the same attraction. The instinct of the majority of those frequenting the theatre now inclines them to wish for real plots, where the joys and troubles of their uneventful lives may be productive of heart-stirring emotions; where the middle classes may no longer be a target for ridicule, but an object of interest; where the problems of conduct, family, marriage, may be dealt with in a tone which will no longer shock decorum, and by virtue of the tears they cause to flow, may contribute to the edification of souls. This public is won over, beforehand, to the arguments of Collier. Under its silent influence sentimental comedy comes into existence before the end of the seventeenth century; and while it is far from being a complete success in its first attempt, it begins a struggle against traditional comedy which lasts throughout the whole age of classicism, and which ends to its advantage. It announces the middle-class drama of Lillo and, in certain of its realistic tendencies, the pathetic and domestic novel of Richardson.

Its history, in the early stages, is rather complicated. It forms not so much a new province of literature as a new spirit, which after its first expression in the work of Colley Cibber,[1] in 1696, attracts disciples and, through a reaction, rouses adversaries. This movement is interwoven with the decline of Restoration comedy. Though Vanbrugh, in *The Relapse*, matches his ironical verve against the new-fangled glorification of goodness of heart, he is not himself absolutely impervious to the contagion of sentiment; and Farquhar is entirely won over to it. The first years of the eighteenth century seem to mark the success of senti-

[1] Colley Cibber, 1671-1757, the son of a sculptor of foreign origin, had a long and full career as actor, theatrical manager and dramatist; his quarrel with Pope made him the hero of the second *Dunciad*. Among his original plays, his adaptations of the English and French theatre, etc., mention should be made of: *Love's Last Shift*, 1696; *The Careless Husband*, 1704; *The Lady's Last Stake*, 1707; *The Non-Juror* (imitated from *Tartufe*), 1717; *The Provoked Husband* (the completed version of *A Journey to London*, by Vanbrugh), 1728. He wrote his autobiography: *Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, 1740. See Bernbaum, *The Drama of Sensibility*, 1915.

mental comedy, with Richard Estcourt (*The Fair Example*, 1703); Steele (*The Lying Lover*, 1703; *The Tender Husband*, 1705; *The Conscious Lovers*, 1722); and even Addison, whose *Drummer* is written in this spirit. And one can see in an anonymous play, *The Rival Brothers* (1704), then in Aaron Hill's *The Fatal Extravagance* (1721), the germs of middle-class tragedy, which will extend the same moral and social principles to plays of a more properly serious intent.

But traditional comedy defends itself; it has, to support it, the habits of the public, the atmosphere of a society in which loose-living is restrained, but not overcome, and in which scepti- [illegible] al [illegible] be [illegible] id [illegible] ie graph, so to say, of the reform begun in manners falls after 1714. Artificially prolonged, comedy after the model of the Restoration survives with Mrs. Centlivre, with Colley Cibber himself, always on the watch for the changes of public taste, and Gay, whose *Beggar's Opera* is a parody of sentimentalism in its early stages.

Thus the rapid movement which appeared to be carrying the century towards the victory of sentiment flags for a generation, owing to social circumstances,[2] and the widespread authority of the classical standards. This check is noticeable both in the progress of manners and in the transformation of literature. It secures for the great period of classicism a relative homogeneity; it throws back to the end of this period such literary events as the decisive appearance of middle-class tragedy, which allow one to realise the evolution of taste in an incontrovertible manner.

The sentimental comedy of Cibber and Steele is therefore a precocious symptom. Its value, moreover, is mainly that of a symptom. With Cibber, the appeal to the emotions is of the most superficial nature; it is the less profound, as the man's temperament does not possess the reserves or sincere sensitiveness which alone could nourish it. Cibber was, above all, a clever stage manager. His private life reveals something other than the family virtues and the tender indulgence of which his plays fondly parade the contagious example. His theatrical instinct, always eager for new effects, shows him from his very first comedy what a hold a certain strain of pathos can have over middle-class feel-

ings, and the pleasure that can accrue from the shedding of gentle tears, at the sight of a conjugal reconciliation in which an exalted love conquers a hard-hearted husband.

What was really new in such a scene was not the theoretical intensity of the sentiment—tragedy, as we have it in Otway or Dryden, was full of frenzied emotions—but its familiar, probable, average quality, middle-class in a word, its possible analogy with the actual experiences of the spectators; and above all, the moral optimism which emanated from it, the infectious power of an effusive faith in the latent fecundity, always ready to burst forth, of a source of goodness hidden in the depths of the soul. Classical rationalism analysed man with a lucidity immune from illusions: with the authors of the first sentimental comedies, as with their contemporary, Shaftesbury, there is adumbrated the doctrine of a human nature that is generous and good, a doctrine of which Rousseau will be the European prophet.

Success gives Cibber a clearer conception of his thesis; he feels himself carried by the current of moral reform, so true is it that the unity of middle-class influence associates the need for sentiment with the inclination to effect a reform in manners. *The Careless Husband* accentuates the moralising tone. But these plays are made up of a mixture of incongruous elements: they still recall in many respects the cynicism of the Restoration. While the elegant coxcomb, Lord Foppington, now becomes ludicrous, the freedom of insinuation is still extreme. Emotion and morals are none the less displayed, in such a crude manner as to exclude all art; while the best plays of Cibber are not without merit, it is only rarely that he rises above mediocrity.

With all his serious faults, Steele endows sentimental comedy with greater finesse and charm. With him, the personality does not jar with the work; his life was not exemplary, but the fond effusion, the appraising of homely virtues, the moralising principles, which make up the character of his plays, answer the permanent preferences of his being. Moreover, he has a gift for comedy, an inventiveness, a liveliness in dialogue; his first play, *The Funeral*, is the most amusing of all; the desire to write in compliance with the injunctions of Collier, and to uphold the part of apostle which from now onwards he assumes, next results in the overstressing of his didactic intent.

The Conscious Lovers, however, has a great success as an

appeal to sensibility. In vain does Dennis point out that the play does not show us real characters, but examples to follow, and further, that the subject is not comic; the public does not trouble to know if it is wrong in applauding a comedy at which it sheds tears, since it finds pleasure in weeping. And Steele, in order to justify himself for having preached against duelling, invokes in his reply the complicity of the audience. . . . To explain this complicity, still other reasons are to be found than the contagious, moving power of the play. *The Conscious Lovers* portrays on the stage a merchant, Mr. Sealand, virtuous, dignified, philanthropic, the model of the "gentleman" according to the new type of society, and thus in striking fashion associates middle-class influences with the literature of feeling.

To be consulted: Bernbaum, *The Drama of Sensibility*, 1915; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. viii chap. vi.; vol. ix. chaps ii. vi xi xiii.; vol x. chap iv.; Doughty, *English Lyric in the Age of Reason*, 1923; Fowler, *Shaftesbury and Hutcheson*, 1882; R. D. Havens, *The Romantic Aspects of the Age of Pope*

accentuated; the change thus started develops. The call for sentiment begins to associate itself with the need of imagination. In society, meanwhile, a parallel and connected movement takes place; the middle class is more and more making its own will recognised in politics, in life and manners. The authority of the aristocracy is not indeed negatived or destroyed, but permeated, modified and continually made more supple, by the bourgeois elements which are commingling with it.

Admitted to a share in social power, the middle class adapts itself to the culture in vogue, not without correcting it in the direction of its own genuine preferences. It appropriates classicism, after having impregnated it, so to say, with its moralising needs. The compromise which was only beginning to shape itself in the time of Addison and Steele is now, in the time of Johnson, an accomplished fact.

The middle class of 1740 does not bring with it any clear desire for reform in the province of art; it has tendencies, but no principles. Socially, its deepest instincts are conservative. It takes its place in the oligarchic framework of the government without shaking it in any way. It is a neighbouring and similar, but other class, more numerous, and proceeding from the growth of modern industry and from a more intense commercial life, which will be destined in the following century to enlarge this framework, in order to make way for itself.

No deep social or economic upheaval menaces as yet the established order of things in the middle years of the century. The inner rhythm set moving does not encounter, under the circumstances, anything that might accelerate it; whilst the literary forms oppose all change with the inevitable resistance of consecrated, official values. Sentimentalism invades life and letters; and the reawakened spirit of Puritanism engages against the sceptical liberty in manners in a struggle that will not stop until it has achieved its victory. But although society is becoming more and more middle-class, and the soul of the nation is undergoing a radical change, there still reigns a rational literature, in which the dominant stamp is that of its aristocratic origins.

Johnson is the head and symbol of this survival of a tradition that is secretly undermined, but that is still kept up through its outer supports, and that even draws a certain increase of vigour

from the new social elements. He represents a temporary fusion, which seems decisive and final, of morality with the taste for solid and regular artistic scales. Belief in rules with him comes so near to the religious conscience as to be indistinguishable from it any more. He is the central figure in an age of bourgeois classicism.

The study of this age will therefore mean a continual swing from movements, men and works that are animated by the spirit of yesterday, or by a spirit that has scarcely changed, to others in which the new inspiration is predominant; from a literature of Reason to a literature of Sentiment. The two masses, on the whole, almost balance each other, though only one of them has an impulse that carries it towards the future, and a force of attraction that constantly adds to its substance.

2. *Johnson; His Temperament.*—The personality of Johnson [1] counts for more than his literary work. His influence proceeds from the bulk, and the weight of his character, the powerful

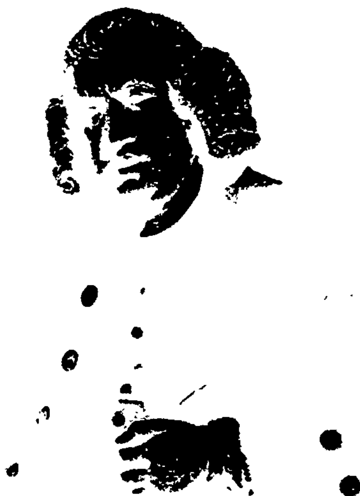
[1] Samuel Johnson, born at Lichfield in 1709, the son of a bookseller, studied at Oxford and essayed the profession of schoolmaster, then sought his fortune in London as an author. His first attempts were protracted and difficult; he collaborated in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, where from 1741 to 1744 he wrote the Parliamentary reports; at last he became known and was rescued from penury by certain circumstantial writings, and two satires, *London* (1738) and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749), the *Life* of his friend, the poet Savage (1744), and his tragedy, *Irene* (1749). He edited periodicals, *The Rambler* (1750-52), *The Idler* (1758-60), the former during the time when he was carrying out the vast enterprise of his *Dictionary* (1747-55). Then he wrote a moral novel (*Rasselas*, 1759), and prepared an edition of *Shakespeare* (1765). In 1762 a government pension brought him leisure; from now onwards he was looked up to and played the part of a general guide and adviser to literature. In 1763 he met Boswell, his biographer, and made with him an excursion to Scotland, of which he gave an account (*A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, 1775). His last work was *The Lives* [illegible]

[illegible] *Lives of Johnson*), ed. by Chalmers, 1810; *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. by Hill and Scott, 1905. *The Journal of a Tour through the Hebrides with Johnson*, by Boswell, ed. by Hill, 1887; *Life of J.*, ed. by Glover, 1901; edn Everyman's [illegible] an, 1925; *The Critical* [illegible] le, *On Heroes*, 1840; [illegible] at Writers), 1887; Sir [illegible] Men of Letters), 1878; [illegible] J., *a Study in Eighteenth Century Humanism*, 1923

base upon which are built up his opinions and ideas, and of which these seem to be only the slightly specialised prolongation.

His was a figure of note among his contemporaries; his physical traits have been given permanence by the painter Reynolds in a speaking portrait—square of breadth, the neck sunken between the shoulders, the face thick-set, with a heavy chin, a narrow wrinkled forehead, and full lips; the gaze questioning and frowning; an expression of concentrated, slightly bitter seriousness. From it all there radiates a philosophy of experience and reflection, thought out by a clear judgment, by a balanced mind, and rooted in the resolution of an energy bound up with the supreme needs of action. The rough vigour, the gravity, the obstinate realism which are breathed forth in this physiognomy, made a silent appeal to the deep instincts of the English people; the most normal temperament of the most representative class, the middle one, saw itself therein; and Carlyle, an admirer of spiritual force associated with an uncouth exterior, ranked Johnson among the national heroes. He has in a very full measure, indeed, the value of a symbol; he represents the intellectualised, superior type of the middle-class citizens who are then claiming and are already conquering the moral control of society.

Born as he was in the midst of books, he begins in his father's shop the life of a voracious reader, who never exhausts a subject but dips into everything; his instincts and literary ambitions are ineffaceably stamped by the writers of antiquity, who form his early studies, and whose works he first imbibes; his classicism is thus founded upon habit, upon the impressions of youth; it gains stability in the search after a disciplined order; and it is made immune from all influences by virtue of an innate preference for orthodoxy, a respect for traditional hierarchies, a fear of or contempt for all innovations. A rational attitude of mind, without excess or system, more empiric yet than logical; conservative tendencies; the sincerity of a personal judgment that has revised for itself all time-consecrated admirations, and has almost always discovered new reasons to approve of them; lastly, religious and moral needs that meet with their satisfaction in an austere philosophy of life, and do not experience any trouble to find it again in the wisdom of centuries, under its pagan as much as under its Christian form—such are the inner



Dr. Samuel Johnson, from a portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds

sources of Johnson's literary doctrine. It derives from them an exceptional assurance as well as an exceptional conviction; and it thus answers to all the deep desires of a nature that is rich and sound, but in no way happy or facile, one in which life has left a permanent bent to pessimism, and where a solitary mind in self-communion speaks with almost mystic intensity.

The search for balance, with Johnson, is an effort of will, a struggle against himself. Without being in the least romantic, his is a troubled if not divided soul; a narrow but deep sensibility lies hidden beneath its rough exterior. Bourgeois classicism still rests upon the ascendancy of rational needs; but along with the imperious desire for a principle of morality a certain amount of emotion has been infused into it.

And yet, Johnson is the enemy of sentimentalism; his very dictatorial taste clings to all that is sure, tested and verified; he feels a craving, not indeed out of timidity and passiveness, but as the result of reflection, for normality, for the happy mean; he loathes extremes in everything. A code in art chimes with his instinctive need of a moral code; he accepts it and approves of it, therefore, for motives of a more varied and more human nature than was the case with the classicists of the previous generation; and by thus giving it a richer substance of impulses and tendencies, he unwittingly makes it more flexible, and to a certain extent broadens it. His scale of literary values is no longer quite the same as that of Pope; he differs from him in his estimate of Shakespeare, whom he feels and appreciates more intimately. But this code in return partakes of the dogmatic character of a creed; and just as with all beliefs in which conduct is involved, it hardens against all threat of a change. Johnson meets any innovation in literature with unconquerable distrust. The principles of the art of writing remain the same for him as when they were formulated by the masters of modern classicism, after the model of the Ancients. As for the signs of unrest, and the initiatives which are coming to light around him, he either ignores or condemns them. He looks upon the heroic couplet as the highest form of verse; rhyme, he holds, is indispensable to poetry. To imitate the Spenserian stanza is but a futile whim. When confronted by the growing popularity of scenic description, of "Nature," he shows but indifference, and almost disdain. He lives and dies without having understood the deep need for

renovation with which the minds of his contemporaries are pregnant.

Thus classicism has from now onwards become a dogma; it is kept alive through its connection with the moral and social needs of authority, order and tradition, rather than through the direct and simple demands of æsthetic taste. At the moment when inspiration seeks new ground, when creative impulses tend to become the privilege of another temperament, and of a new psychological attitude, the secretly threatened orthodoxy intensifies and more clearly realises the consciousness of its own strength. The dogmatic character of this religion in decline is hardening.

3. *Works; Poems, Essays.*—There is an element of uncertainty in Johnson's literary career; it is crossed by circumstances, and does not offer the picture of a logical and continuous development. Many years pass before he finds himself, and his true vocation. At bottom, no necessary impulse urges him to write, save the need for passing judgment on men and books. He will come, finally, to voice his reflections on the writings of others, and on life; he will be a moralist and critic, and it is as such, sustained by the rich reserves of his temperament, that he will be fully himself.

But before he dare be such, he must earn his living, adapt himself to accepted forms, and try his hand in the fashionable kinds of writing. The classical age has left intact the prestige of regular poetry, and the satires of Pope dominate the classical age. So Johnson pens a satire, *London,* in imitation of Pope; but it is Juvenal, and not Horace, who supplies the model. It is an estimable piece of work, and of a forcefulness that did not pass unnoticed; Pope felt in it the promise of fame. But the silent decisions of instinct are directing into other channels a mind to which prose comes more naturally than verse. Once again, however, he returns to satire; *The Vanity of Human Wishes* is already the stronger and fuller expression of a personality; in it the taste for moral dissertation is more freely indulged; and instead of the traditional commonplaces, we have there maxims still general, but enlivened by the note of an individual philosophy, of a mood which harmonises quite easily with Juvenal's pessimism. These couplets, in spite of their pauses, which the ear foresees and expects, and in spite of their language, strewn as it is with abstractions, quiver with an inner sincerity,

that now and then bursts forth in the new vividness of an epithet, or in energetic and dense forms of expression.

These gifts, however, are not enough to revive a style of writing now worn out. Johnson might have continued Pope, without equalling him; but he turns intuitively to other things. His tragedy *Irene* is a further meritorious attempt, without a morrow. Here again, the truth of moral conscience comes to the surface, while the form has a dignity that is at times other than pompous. But ethics do not suffice to sustain the interest of a tragedy; and despite the support of Garrick, the spectators were not carried away by an emotion that was too devoid of tenderness. The feminine touch was always wanting in the genius of Johnson.

Disappointed in poetry, he comes to essay-writing. The *Rambler* and the *Idler* take up again the tradition of the *Spectator*. Reflections of a moralising nature are here more in their place, and this part of Johnson's work is of a solid worth; it has better stood the test of time. To enter into it to-day is to give one's self up to the guidance of a judicious thinker, who sheds the light itself of good sense over all that he touches. His thought is so sound, and appears so natural, that one is tempted into thinking it commonplace; and herein lies its artistic weakness These robust analyses and arguments manage in places to extract from the gangue of common truths precious stones which would sparkle more brilliantly if they were cut with greater skill; a vein of humour, of keen personal perception, runs through these exercises of a mind which one might regard as subjected to the automatism of a reasoning habit now become settled. But the style confirms the appearance of a wisdom too regular, too sure of itself, too equal throughout, not to be slightly passive: it is ample, imposing, oratorical, cast in a uniform mould; its very firmness, its infallibility, rouse in the reader a longing for fancy and paradox. Our remembrance of the *Spectator* has a grievous effect upon these essays; the grace, the lightness of touch of Addison and Steele offer too sharp a contrast to this massive robustness of Johnson, which becomes heavy and pedantic in comparison. Edified but not delighted, the general public contented itself with this verdict which no doubt was severe; and none to-day, save the specialist, ever reads these works. While lacking the rich picturesque interest of the *Spectator*, they are not

without value to the historian of manners; and Johnson himself stands revealed in them with a relishable fullness of touch.

4. *The Dictionary.*—The grammarian and the philosopher had more success than the essayist. The *Dictionary of the English Language* remained, for nearly a century, a work of reference, consulted as such by the layman as well as by the savant. Johnson wanted to write both for the critics and for merely cultivated readers, to strike an average between a literary lexicon and a technical encyclopædia. His desire is above all to "preserve the purity, and determine the sense, of our English idiom"; whilst the value of words, and their pronunciation, are still in a state of instability, he hopes to put an end to variations which his instinct condemns; the need of a set rule—a purely classical need—is the impulse he obeys. He was not specially equipped for this task; but he brings to it a trained power of reflection, a perfect knowledge of the current vocabulary, an instinct for the connecting links and transitions which exist between the successive meanings of a term. The preface in which he expounds, with a remarkable loftiness of view, the intention, the plan and the method of his work, is one of the sources of English linguistics. The development of language, its causes, its aspects, such is the central fact round which works an intuition that is sometimes wrongly informed, but always sound and often gifted with divination. In thus probing beyond the superficial course of language to the deep life of the mind which manifests itself in it, Johnson lays down the principle of that necessary return to the national origins, a dim consciousness of which was being stirred, at that very time, by the inner movement of minds. The English language, he says, has deviated from its original character; its phraseology, and even its structure, have come nearer to the French model; it is now time to correct the excess of this influence; the literature of the Elizabethans is the permanent treasure store of the expressions and the forms in which the particular genius of the English people can gain new vitality.

Johnson's dictionary helped to fix the English language; by determining and classifying the diverse meanings of words, he gave greater sureness to the labour of analysis which constitutes a part of the art of writing. He counts among the influences to which the instrument of literature in the eighteenth century owes

its superior stability, and a character of solidity that is, one might say, definitive. He deserves this place through the qualities of logic, clearness and finesse displayed by a mind nurtured on the classics, strong, well balanced, and penetrating. The omissions and errors of the *Dictionary*, notably in the yet badly explored domain of etymology; the personal whims, the flights of prejudice or humour, which lend a paradoxical air to many a definition; an inadequate reading of texts, the effect of which is to give certain elements of the language an undue predominance over others—flaws such as these were inevitable; the *Dictionary* is the work of a single man, hampered by circumstances, and by illness. It remains, however, a monument of industry and intellectual conscience. But it has done nothing to restore to the language that freedom of imagination, that concrete wealth of idiom, which the practice of the Elizabethans possessed. While Johnson's instinct is unwittingly in agreement with the silent preparation of Romanticism, his intellect and reflection on the other hand are purely classical. The *Dictionary* registers and consecrates the intellectualisation of the language effected by a whole century of analysis and logical effort.

5. *"Rasselas"; Literary Criticism.*—A novel, or rather an allegory, *Rasselas;* critical studies—the preface to the edition of Shakespeare, *The Lives of the Poets*—such are Johnson's most solid claims to a place among the reputations which to-day remain living. The harmony of temperament, of subject and of form has allowed him in these writings to realise his moral purpose with surer artistic success.

Rasselas is an oriental tale, placed in a rather vague setting, and written in a somewhat abstract and solemn style. The classical generality of thought and language in these pages battles victoriously with the picturesque element, the local particularity of the theme, of the incidents and characters; Johnson's imagination evokes pictures with only a brief stroke of the pen, it glides over details without stopping, so impatient is it to discover everywhere and continually the permanent basis of human nature. But this language makes up for its slightly artificial quality by its accuracy and clearness, by a sense of balance which, although savouring of oratory, does not reside in the words but in the logic and the thought; the vocabulary, often dignified to an excess, and somewhat pompous, is refined by the intelligence of the

proper meaning of words, and of their first use. The thought itself, which can be summed up in commonplaces, is saved from banality by a fresh intuitive grasp of the complexity of things, of the illogical demands of conduct. Thus Johnson's rationalism shows itself as wholly penetrated by a profound sense of the limits of Reason; the wisdom he teaches gives first place to experience.

The vivid interest of the book lies in this wisdom, and in the revelation which Johnson has given us therein of himself. *Rasselas* appeared a few weeks after Voltaire's *Candide,* too early to encourage the supposition of an influence; the moral lesson is rather similar in both tales, but they are none the less very different in spirit. Johnson's pessimism springs from an unhappy, not an ironical state of mind. It is accompanied by a persistent profession of faith in virtue, which to him is not a snare, and on the contrary represents the only certitude in life; but whilst man instinctively expects happiness from it, he finds that it is unable to fulfil that hope. What Johnson thus denies, is the invincible utilitarian optimism on which the English conception of duty is built up. The virtuous individual, temperate in his desires, will not, he thinks, be a happy man for that: the ways of Nature and reality are too fertile in unforeseen happenings, and the only true prudence lies in a submission to events. Sad and fatalistic, Johnson's moralising has a background of mysticism; with the avowal of the inevitable defeat which chance inflicts upon all wisdom, it offers positive precepts, a cure to alleviate the anguish of man's soul, if not his pain: the respect for the visionary truths of conscience, and the sacrifice of personal feeling, a quietistic resignation not irreconcilable with action.

Despite the force of moral reflection in *Rasselas,* there is still some literary weakness: the characters, while they are not all lacking in substance, are too obviously brought into being in order to satisfy some didactic purpose. It is therefore a relief to come to works where without any artificiality Johnson's thought bears directly upon its object, and expresses itself quite independently. His judgment of Shakespeare marks a date in the history of criticism. Here the value of his opinion does not only rest on the massive strength, the sure penetrating power of a perception which probes to the very core of Shakespeare's art, and touches, shows up its deep humanity, its sovereign realism;

for this perception, admirably accurate as a whole, is not devoid of some errors of vision when it comes to details. Johnson sees Shakespeare through his own preconceived opinions and grievances; and the reserves which he believes himself justified in making are proof of this. His taste is not a little shocked by the dramatic daring of the author of *Macbeth* and *King Lear;* Shakespeare, in his opinion, succeeded much better in comedy than in tragedy. Another charge is that these plays are evidence of a shocking indifference to moral justice. Shakespeare's anachronisms are disconcerting, his rhetoric cold and forced; and lastly, he cannot resist the fatal attraction of one of those double meanings in words which reduce the pure-minded reader to despair.... In this way Johnson emphasises fairly well the points in which Shakespeare's æsthetics differ from those of his own time; and even if most of his remarks are justified, and on the other hand if his positive appreciation is wholly animated by a warm sympathy, it can be said that this judgment remains essentially dogmatic; in no way does it depart from the point of view of classicism.

But it broadens this point of view to a remarkable extent. Classical doctrine is renewed by a fruitful appeal to the resources of literary psychology. It is towards inner observation that Johnson reverts, in order to tackle and solve in an original and daring manner the tritest problems of dramatic art. By interweaving comedy and tragedy, did Shakespeare commit the most unpardonable of offences, as orthodox criticism would have us believe? Is not this mixed art, after all, in keeping with the varied character of all experience, and with the actual laws of attention? It is unpleasant in logic to be shifted from one tonality to another. Might it not be restful, in fact, for the needs of consciousness? Dryden had already sketched out an argument of this kind, but Johnson carries his analysis and demonstration still further.

It is therefore in the name of the concrete life of the mind that he answers the deductions of the rationalistic French critics. But he does not stop there; as if alarmed at his own audacity, and seeking to excuse himself, he attacks the rule of the three unities. When closely examined, in the light of experimental data, it fades away. Its origin is the fear of a disquietude of mind which does not exist; an imaginary fear, that has been

in the relation of it which Boswell has left us under another title; or again if one does not read the minute, luxuriant, diffuse biography in which Boswell brings his doctrinal friend to life again, and makes him live and speak, and this with an impassioned effacement of self, a sincerity of admiration at the same time discriminating, a sympathy which does not involve any abdication of judgment, all of which reveal his own figure just as that of his hero, and have assured him the immortality of a satellite in the effulgence of a star.

The influence of Johnson has been social and moral just as much as literary. He has definitely fixed the type of the modern man of letters; and better even than Pope, has given him the dignity of independence. His famous letter to Lord Chesterfield proclaims the close of the age of patrons. A personal authority on literature and manners, a critic of standing, he contributes in maintaining order and stability through a period that is secretly in the throes of a vast transition already begun. His decrees maintain and justify the valuations of the past, even if they be prompted by new reasons; he is therefore a reformer in nothing. Did he retard the evolution of literature? One cannot positively say so. The forces which are holding it back at this time are greater than the individuals themselves; in the conservative quality of his moral and middle-class instinct, Johnson is a product just as much as he is a cause.

6. *The Poets of Classical Tradition*.—Posterity has come to look upon Johnson as the head of a school. But his magisterial authority was above all retrospective: he consecrated the glories of the past. In his connection with the writers of his time, he rather exerted a diffuse action, than played the part of an inspirer and guide. It is in vain that one looks around him for his school of poetry; none such exists.

The reason is that life is now tending to abandon the purely classical forms of verse. Classicism has become a set of rules, receipts and devices; it may have the entire assent of critical faculties and enlightened taste: yet, it no longer voices, the instincts of creative genius. The impulse which still carries English literature forward during the first decades of the century exhausts itself by degrees in the field of poetry. One hardly encounters now any great names or any great works.

The age of Johnson, however, has its poets; but almost all

of them who give proof of personal talent belong to another psychological temperament, and their classicism is modified by an inner change. Their inspiration flows from other sources. Through the feelings which prompt their lines, they reveal the depth of a transition in progress, even if the prestige of classical form still sways them, and if expression with them does not show the same renewal.

In the lineage itself of an integral classicism, we only find poets of second- or third-class merit. The "eclogues" of Lord Lyttelton,[1] and his circumstantial verse, are the docile exercises of an imitator of Pope; the works of his maturity strike a rather different note. John Armstrong[2] shows an inverse development, for while his poem, *Winter*, written in 1725, reveals a rather original vigour, his *Art of Preserving Health* (1744) keeps, so to say, the promise of its claim. The case is more simple with Matthew Green,[3] Nathaniel Cotton,[4] Richard Glover[5] and James Grainger.[6] And if Mark Akenside[7] did not show, through his consciousness of the power of imagination, some affinity with one of the aspects of the psychological rebirth, one would be tempted to rank him among the most belated representatives of an exhausted inspiration, so much is his language encumbered with laboured artifice.[8]

These poets reveal in different degrees, and under various aspects, a similar impoverishment of inspiration. The art of writing in verse becomes an end in itself, and is indulged in quite independently of any emotive impulse. Belonging to pure intellect, this poetry finds its nutriment in imitation, witticisms, conventional gallantry, the teaching of facts, the development of abstract themes. It is descriptive, witty and didactic. The instrument it handles is for the most part the heroic couplet, the breaks and flow of which offer an unconquerably monotonous

[1] 1709-73; *The Progress of Love*, in 4 Eclogues (Chalmers, *English Poets*, vol. xiv.).

[2] 1709-79; *Poems*, Chalmers, vol. xvi.

[3] 1697-1737; *The Spleen*, 1737.

[4] 1705-1788; *Poems*, Chalmers, vol. xviii.

[5] 1712-1785; *Leonidas*, 1737; *London, or the Progress of Commerce*, 1739; etc.; *Poems*, Chalmers, vol. xvii.

[6] 1721?-1766; *The Sugar-Cane*, 1764.

[7] 1721-1770; *The Pleasures of Imagination*, 1744; Chalmers, vol. xiv.

[8] Henry Brooke, a transitional figure in literature (see further, Book IV, chap. ii. sect. 3), is better known as a novelist; his verse is after the pattern of the old school (*The Universal Beauty*, 1735).

regularity; or, as in the case of Glover and Armstrong, a blank verse puffed out with a false eloquence by a rhetoric that is wholly verbal. Subjects such as *The Art of Preserving Health* or *The Sugar-Cane* suffice to indicate the artistic plane in which these writers deliberately place themselves. . . .

The literature of intellectuality is not dead. But classicism from now onwards seeks its natural expression rather in the domain of prose. It is the novel, or the philosophical treatise, that enables it to justify through outstanding works the doctrinal authority of which it jealously preserves the privilege. The expression of pure ideas continues to furnish it with the opportunity for finely reclaiming itself; and in the studies of manners, realism affords it the means to grow richer by turning its principle of truth to new uses.

To be consulted: Barbeau, *Une Ville d'Eaux au XVIIIe Siècle, La Société Elégante et Littéraire à Bath*, etc., 1904, Bailey, *Dr Johnson and His Circle*, 1913; Boswell, *Life of Johnson;* idem, *Selections*, ed. by Chapman, 1919, *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol x chaps. vii viii; Collins, *Authorship in the Days of Johnson*, etc., 1927; Digeon, *Les Romans de Fielding*, 1923; Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, 1781 (ed. by Hill, 1906), Seccombe, *The Age of Johnson*, 1900; Millar, *The Mid-Eighteenth Century*, 1902, Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, 12th edition, 1899, Gosse, *History of Eighteenth Century Literature*, 1889; Leslie Stephen, *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 1904, Tinker, *The Salon and English Letters*, 1915; A. S. Turberville, *English Men and Manners in the Eighteenth Century*, 1926.

CHAPTER II

THE POETRY OF SENTIMENT

1. *Transitional Poets: Akenside, Falconer, etc.*—The eighteenth century in its central body is traversed by a development in poetry, the stages of which mark the progressive advent of a new inspiration. Just as the invasion of sentimentalism transforms the moral life, so the literature, and particularly the poetry, are transformed by the gradual appearance of themes based on sentiment, which come to take their place beside the classical motives.

This growth is a movement emanating from within. It modifies the soul of poetry before modifying its body; it does not reveal itself immediately, or regularly, or evenly, in the verse and the style. As there is always a certain connection between the matter and the manner, this change ends by making itself felt; but with more or less rapidity, more or less accuracy. For such connections are supple, and have nothing that might be termed imperiously binding; their elasticity permits of delays, adaptations and compromises. In fact, the evolution in language and in verse follows at a distance the one effected in inspiration, and at a pace that varies according to all individual accidents. On the whole, and despite numerous signs, some noteworthy initiatives, and a partial effort towards rejuvenation, the poetry of sentiment continues to express itself in classical forms. And we find in it the greatest variety of expressions. A certain intimate community of character is hidden beneath the most striking differences in general movement, literary kinds, subjects and language.

This mass of writers and works, however, constitutes a whole, and should be studied from the aspect of its unity; at least if it be true that, even when dealing with poetry, literary history must choose its guiding lines and build up its framework according to spiritual affinities, rather than by analogies of form.

From the mental point of view, as from that of form, the diversity in temperaments does not lend itself to a rigorous and simple classification. The poets of sentiment are not parted

from the classical poets by any clear line. The two domains overlap; or rather, there exists between them quite an intermediary zone; and there we find a progressive series of mixed personalities, who form the transition from one group to the other.

From the third to the eighth decade of the century, a great number of authors are writing in verse from impulses that are for the most part rational, but in which there is an admixture, variously proportioned, of those of the new spirit. Sentiment does not become in a moment, or without a struggle, for each person any more than for the whole society, the dominant element of life and thought. Unconscious imitations, suggestion, the influence of the surroundings, also play their part in suffusing with an emotional tone natures that were spontaneously immune from it. Thus it is that we witness in the case of several writers infiltrations of sentimentalism, which gradually alter the primitive singleness of their inner being. And whenever these moral changes are not decisive, they result in divided inspiration, which must be looked upon and classed as such.

The poets who show these hesitations are most often of mediocre quality; they offer an open field to contradictory influences, without being able to come to a decision or make a choice. Yet they have the interest of mediocre writers, in whom are shown with greater clearness the changes in course of development. Such is Lord Lyttelton, who from his artificial pastorals and frigid light pieces passes, towards the end of his life, to a sincere elegiac sentiment in a poem of personal effusion (*Monody*, etc.). Such also James Grainger, the author of *The Sugar-Cane*, the least readable among the technical poems of an age fertile in errors of a similar nature, and who, writing an *Ode on Solitude*, gives expression very awkwardly, but not without truth, and in the midst of allegorical trash, to the confused emotion of a very romantic melancholy. Such again Akenside[1] whose work is interesting in many respects. His main inspiration, and the form in which he vests it, are still of a very mediocre pseudo-classicism. but through his psychological curiosity, associated with ethical preoccupations, through his clear view of what the human soul can gain by appropriating the grandeur and beauty of Nature, as also through the gravity, often Miltonian, of his language and

[1] For these three poets, see the end of the preceding chapter.

blank verse, he might be termed a predecessor of Wordsworth. Despite the intellectualism of the thought, the abstract nature of the style, a certain idealistic emotion at such times animates his poem, and imparts to it the value of a sign and a preparation of the future.

William Falconer[1] is still another transition poet, and of a very curious type. His mind is haunted by classical memories; his heroes have Greek names; his style aims at nobleness by way of generality; whilst his language is strewn with naval terms, he does his best to drown them in the purest jargon of the fashionable poetic diction. But all this artificiality is bathed in a diffuse sentimentalism; and, above all, it is broken through from time to time by a vigorous and sincere element of tragedy, a direct sense of the cruel realities of the sea and of death. A source of poetry refreshed through contact with genuine experience, and sensation, tries in vain to come to the surface from beneath a passive observance of literary conventions. Even in William Whitehead,[2] at a far advanced date in the century, one can find the persisting trace of the examples set by Pope, the intentions and the devices of a decadent classicism, unreadable "Odes"; and at the same time, an elegiac sweetness and grace, a true feeling for landscape; while in one of his poems, *The Enthusiast,* are accents which convey with singular force all the rapture of solitude and of natural scenery.

Very many would be the examples of the same kind, if it were of any advantage to linger over them. Most of these poets owe the secret and partial change of their instincts to the moral transformation of the century, the rhythm of which they unconsciously follow, and to the influence of less timid writers. In their works we catch the echoes of Thomson, Young, Collins, Gray, and of all that poetic group with whom inspiration is clearly enough penetrated by the new spirit for one to be able to place it, unhesitatingly, on the direct road of the future.

2. *Nature; Thomson, Dyer.*—The growth of the poetry of sentiment proceeds by successive advances. Nothing is richer than emotion as a motive of poetry; in a sense, it constitutes the normal and necessary source of all rhythmic language. What is

[1] 1732-69; *The Shipwreck,* 1762; *Poems,* Chalmers, vol. xiv.
[2] 1715-85; *Poems,* Chalmers, vols. xvi. and xvii.

recommencing, therefore, is not a particular kind, but all the diversity of poetry itself.

No doubt, the eighteenth century will be far from exhausting this whole range. On account of the effect of social restraint, which has a retarding influence upon moral evolution, it will give as yet only a sober sketch of its possibilities. It will be left to the following century to allow sentimental effusion all its intensity and freedom, and to decisively harmonise form with a renewed inspiration. But already we are shown with sufficient clearness the main lines along which this inspiration will work. And the successive appearance of these lines, as revealed by exact chronology, enables us to perceive without too much artifice a coherent order of development.

The first element which comes into prominence is the emotional theme of Nature. The instinctive naturalism of the English mind was never completely neutralised by classical influences. The vigorous reviviscence of this tendency well before the middle of the century is therefore in itself nothing of a surprise. It must also be made clear that at its source this vein is less properly sentimental than it is sensitive. It represents more easily a continuation of classicism than will the purer emotions, freer from all material support, that will develop shortly after.

From a certain point of view, the feeling for Nature with Thomson[1] springs from that realism of concrete description which is an essential element of classical art and which already, even with the masters of the school, was sometimes tinged by a fond affection for natural scenery. Thomson's inspiration is a realism that has blossomed out into a keen, coloured and glowing sensation. This ardour of sensuous perception is an undoubted

[1] James Thomson, born in 1700, in the south of Scotland, was the son of a minister and studied at Edinburgh; renouncing an ecclesiastical career, he journeyed to London in 1725, earned his living by teaching, and published *Winter* in 1726; then came *Summer* (1727), *Spring* (1728) and *Autumn*, which completed the *Seasons*, in 1730. Three years later, he received a sinecure, then a pension which allowed him to finish a political poem, *Liberty* (1736), to settle at Richmond not far from Pope, and there to prepare, perhaps with the latter's guidance, a revised [illegible] *The Castle of Indolence*, [illegible] (see Book II chap iv. [illegible] *Castle of Indolence*, [illegible] 1785; L. Morel, *James Thomson*, 1895; G. C. Macaulay, *Thomson* (English Men of Letters), 1908, M. Reynolds, *The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry between Pope and Wordsworth*, 1912.

originality in itself; besides, it is accompanied by a general tone of deeply moved sensibility. But we are here only in the rather exterior regions of the poetry of sentiment; and this exteriority might not be unconnected with the fact that form, with Thomson, is still very closely allied to the intentions and devices of classicism.

His features are therefore above all mixed. In the light of his work as of his life, we find two men in him. The one is an amiable epicurean, care-free, the friend of easy leisure, who through his mind, tastes and character was very readily won over to the cult of ancient beauty and of traditional literary models. The other bears the stamp of an ecclesiastic education, more severe and moralising; religiously inclined, and fond also of sentiment. Judged by certain traits, if the first Thomson is in many ways at one with Pope, the second is already in keeping with Richardson. And it is the second, no doubt, who is better in agreement with the social and psychological movement in which the line of literary progression is dimly outlined.

It seems temptingly simple to connect the classical elements in the work of Thomson with the first group of tendencies, and the elements of transition with the second. Such an interpretation will not be altogether wrong, but things are not so clear-cut. What we can distinguish as the most certain feature of Thomson's originality—the sense of the physical world, the rich perception of Nature—is at once made up of the two temperaments which he unites in himself, and the distinction of which is, to say the truth, wholly abstract.

The scenery of the seasons, as Thomson paints it, is composed of still general touches; a mind guided by literary memories, by time-consecrated models, constructs its main framework. It is the course of the sun through the signs of the zodiac which sets moving this changing sequence; the Muse presides over all the transitions; mythology is the background of the modern and real horizon in which the festivities or the sorrows of Heaven and Earth unfold themselves, in all their grandeur and brilliance. The scenes of country life irresistibly assume the style of typical and Vergilian episodes; the spirit of the *Georgics* puts them together and evolves them. This classical atmosphere is more distinctly felt in a language that is scholarly, strewn with Latinisms, where the epithet has often a character of conventional

banality, and from which poetic diction is by no means absent. Thomson describes Nature by educing from the multiplicity of facts the forms to which they can be reduced, and which enable the mind to classify them. The seasons are the most general of these forms; the aspects of each season, the activities associated with them, are others. His inspiration of a generalising and didactic trend remains in so far intellectual; and the inner quality of his style appears in the constant employment of the definite article (not necessary for present use), which suggests the influence of French syntax, and gives to the poetry as to the prose of this epoch the colour of a literature written under the constant stimulus of a search after universality of statement.

But as against the abstraction of the central thought, we have the particular value of the images and sensations evoked. Built upon a need for truth, classicism contained within itself the very principle of realism; but the almost exclusive preoccupation of general truths kept its effort away from the wealth of reality. With Thomson, classical art opens itself broadly to the concrete; and immediately it receives a new vitality from this contact.

The reason is that the intelligence is no longer exclusively called upon to receive this inrush of sensations, to organise them, distribute them, despoil them of their characteristic element; the realism of Thomson is of a superior poetic fecundity, because it is the spontaneous exercise of a sensitive temperament, capable of strong and delicate impressions, trained from an early hour in the discriminations and enjoyments of the eye and ear and touch. The voluptuous epicurean whose instincts harmonise so well, in other respects, with a traditional culture and a humanistic inspiration, has been an unconscious innovator because he has not forgotten, as he wrote, that he had senses. By loading his verse with all their joys, he introduced into a rational and jejune art a complexity and a luxuriance foreign to its usual effects.

It is therefore difficult to believe that the coloured intensity of sensation, in the *Seasons*, would have developed with this tranquil audacity, had not other tendencies intervened to favour it. The wealth of concrete description is strengthened by a whole group of impulses of the emotional order. Here it is, to speak properly, that the feeling for Nature appears. It springs from the diffuse sentimentalism which, in the case of Thomson, is bound up with his moralising temperament, religious, patriotic,

and in full sympathy with the instincts of the middle classes. Thus the minute attention with which the charm of the English countryside is appreciated and depicted appears as it were animated by an inner ardour, strong enough to become a dominant passion of the soul, and to gather all its desires around itself.

But it is a tempered passion, without anything violent or exalted; a sort of fond complacency, that includes many elements destined to develop with the progress of the century: the taste for pure and peaceful emotions, the calm rapture called forth by verdant sites, the relaxing of body and mind, the soothing sense reaped from the sight of innocent, idyllic simplicity; the half-sincere preference for a primitive, upright and pious life, far removed from the overheated artificiality of towns. Thomson's feeling for Nature has already something religious about it, just as it has something national; but while it is conscious of its social and philosophic prepossessions, it does not as yet uphold them with the uncompromising zeal of a Rousseau.

Its success is elsewhere, in the notation of what it sees and feels. To pass from the pastorals of Pope, or from *Windsor Forest*, to the *Seasons*, is to pass from too expert a flute, or from a pompously sylvan lyre, to an arranged but harmoniously sweet concert of all the voices of fields and woods and hills. No doubt, it will happen that the description is more conscientiously precise than poetic. But a decisive step has been taken towards the discovery of a sensible world then forgotten, if not unknown.

The episodes, anecdotes and moralising reflections fade from our memory; what remains is a series of visions, of a delightful freshness and penetrating charm. The poetry of nature is actually there in its blooming fullness, for the first time in many years. It springs, first and foremost, from exactitude. Its range is certainly not complete; it lacks its grandest, wildest, most mystical notes. However, it would be wrong to look upon Thomson as a Dutch painter of fat pastures and jolly farm-houses, whose outlook is limited by an ideal of comfortable sanity. The landscape he describes is indeed that which he could love and observe in the south of Scotland or in the neighbourhood of London; the sky and the ground in his pictures are familiar and reassuring; if he leaves this well-known domain for the high mountain, the pole or the desert, the effort is immediately perceptible. But within the limits of his experience, he was able to

feel, and knew how to convey, a remarkable vivacity of character. The notes of vernal sweetness, and of pensive autumnal beauty, are those best suited to the tone of his temperament; and he expresses the rapture of the ones, as the melancholy of the others, with an intensity of feeling, a fullness of emotion, that will be surpassed only by Romanticism at the zenith of its power.

It is towards Romanticism, indeed, that this work is unwittingly verging, however immune it may be from all revolutionary intent. The hymn which closes the *Seasons* makes one think of Coleridge. Their form even is not entirely cast in the classical mould. Out of a desire to react against an over-summary opinion, one has perhaps, in the opposite sense, too much connected Thomson with the past. However artificial his language, it none the less obtains effects of light and sonority which restore to literature resources of art neglected for several generations. His search for imitative harmony is carried to a sort of impressionism. And to the cult of Pope, he has added that of Milton and Spenser.

It would be wrong to think that at the end of the seventeenth century, and in the beginning of the eighteenth, these masters were ignored. The broadest minds of the time preserved a veneration for them, which they reconciled very well with classical principles. But it was Thomson's desire to borrow from the strong solemn beauties of *Paradise Lost*, a religious, national and poetic classicism; he wanted to model his blank verse on that of Milton. His talent of a soft happy temper did not lend itself to the powerful austere orchestration of that writer; his attempt, however, was only half an error. He borrowed from Milton, over and above his Latinisms, something of his nobleness; and the versification of the *Seasons* is of a very creditable quality; its tones, in an age swayed by the imperious rule of the rhymed couplet, ring with a strength, a liberty, a suppleness, the tradition of which had been lost.

There are traces in the *Seasons* of the influence of Spenser; but it is in *The Castle of Indolence* that it displays its fecundity. This unequal poem, the edifying intention of which scarcely corresponds with its artistic truth, is perhaps the most successful imitation in English literature; and in certain respects it is better than an imitation. Here Thomson gives vent to all his somnolent epicurean tastes more than he himself wanted to, and

symbolises with charming felicity the soul's succumbing to the pleasures of a care-free nature. The Spenserian stanza, which he strews with archaisms at times quite fanciful, but animates with a generally very correct movement, seems as if it had been made for the theme to which it is here applied; its richness, its ample musical unfolding, suit both the temperament of Thomson, and the subject. No more evocative poem was written in the eighteenth century.

Thomson had given voice to deep aspirations, which many shared; he restored Nature to one of the first places among the subjects of poetry, and to a place from which she was never to be dislodged. He had immediately a following, and found imitators, while his diffuse action is to be felt everywhere.

Dyer[1] is rather his rival than his disciple. A very short interval separates the first of the *Seasons* from *Grongar Hill.*

It is through this poem that he has retained a place in the memory of the cultivated public. *The Ruins of Rome* is an ambitious declamation, in which the blank verse has at times a vigour of touch. *The Fleece,* a curious work, has more than one kind of interest, but it is almost devoid of poetic merit; on the other hand, no text allows one to appreciate better the importance of the national spirit in the literature of middle-class inspiration during the eighteenth century. Sentimentalism, and fondness in description, are here restrained by a dominant theme, at once technical and moral: the woollen industry, its material, its working, its markets, and the pride taken in the prosperity which it supports, all form an admirable subject for a social study, but not for a poem in four books. Dyer is here in the plane of purely didactic classicism; and the form of his work, with its very artificial quality, suffers thereby.

By the side of these errors, *Grongar Hill* is a wonderful little thing, not without a few blemishes. Here one can take stock of the silent progress made since Denham, and then Pope, had treated analogous themes. The contemplation of the landscape assumes the dreaminess of meditation; the perspective, reflected in a sensibility, and no longer in a curious and architectural intelli-

[1] John Dyer, born in Wales about 1700, the son of a lawyer, began as a painter, exploring as a wandering artist his native country, where he wrote *Grongar Hill* (1726); after a sojourn in Italy he published *The Ruins of Rome* (1740); took orders, led the life of a rural cleric, published in 1757 *The Fleece,* and died in 1758. *Poems,* Chalmers, vol. xiii.

gence, wraps itself in poetry; the sense of vagueness allows a mystery to float over it, while an eye better trained in deciphering the aspects of things gives to the detail—to each kind of tree for example—all its preciseness. And the short, light rhythm of Milton's descriptive poems introduces a touch of fluidity into a delicately evocative whole.

Among the direct heirs of Thomson, one might mention David Mallet,[1] who applies the plan of the *Seasons* to the diverse aspects of a day; with a less fine, less polished art, he has just as sincere a feeling for Nature, and his *Winter's Day* is an elegiac effusion of striking sentiment, beneath a conventional form. One might also mention William Somerville,[2] a country gentleman, whose blank verse recalls that of the *Seasons*, with less suppleness, and to whom Nature is above all the theatre of hunting feats.

It is through the resemblance of the metric instrument that we can here recognise the action of Thompson. Elsewhere, less easily seen, it can still be felt; in broadening circles, it henceforth impregnates the whole domain of descriptive poetry. Underneath the vogue of the unrhymed line, one catches in its progress this wave of influence, awakening a latent susceptibility to the emotions which have their source in the physical universe.

3. *Night, Death; Young, etc.*—Some aspects of Nature harmonise with painful emotions; a landscape can be a symbol, just as much as a suggestion, of sadness. The poetical pleasure of experiencing this suggestion shades off, by an easy transition, into the paradoxical voluptuousness of a sorrow that is indulged in for its own sake. The poets of Nature, from the first, showed themselves keenly desirous of tender emotions. Already in the opening stages of its new vogue the cult of feeling reaches this stage of psychological inversion—an inversion so constant that it assumes normality—in which a joy is extracted from suffering. The fond search for a mournful kind of pathos soon appears among the essential themes which are helping to swell the poetry of sentiment; after the poets of the countryside, and in close accord with them, appear those who draw their inspiration from night, death and melancholy.

The origin of this theme is by no means simple. It arises from the need of feeling, which is developing, and therefore

[1] 1705?-1765; *The Excursion*, 1728

[2] 1675-1742; *The Chase*, 1735.

corresponds with a kind of transposed sensuality. But it has neither the aspect, nor the inner realisation of itself, that the perverted taste for an imaginary emotion would imply. It knows itself, and perceives itself, as the orthodox stirring of a pious soul. It associates itself with the revival of religious and moral preoccupations. Midnight thoughts, the obsession of the grave, the effusions of intimate grief and the pleasure of shedding tears, are directly connected through their innermost origins with the renascence of the Puritan spirit, which is favoured by the rise of the middle class. Puritanism had for long lived on sombre, tortured visions; it retains its colour, even if it mitigates its austerity in a way dangerous to itself, when consciously cultivating tragic thrills or a sadness that has its delights.

By virtue of his wide influence in literature, Young is the central figure of this group of poets; the success of his work popularised a theme, and spread its fascination throughout all Europe, where a sympathetic echo is awakened and passes among the nations which are being prepared by an inner movement for Romanticism. In so far as melancholy is bound up with the feeling for Nature, he is not an innovator. The renewed emotion to which Thomson had given the first frank expression was tending as if by an irresistible affinity towards this shade of sentiment; *Autumn* was already the most seductive of the *Seasons*. The night motive had been already sketched by Lady Winchilsea (*Nocturnal Reverie*) and Parnell (*Night Piece on Death*). Two years before the publication of the *Night Thoughts*, Joseph Warton,[1] destined with his brother Thomas to shake the critical dogmatism upon which classicism rested,[2] wrote an awkward, naïve poem, commonplace in form, but raised by a rough and sincere inspiration, *The Enthusiast, or the Lover of Nature*. The point at which Thomson had stopped is now passed; love and desire soar impetuously towards the great stretches of wild nature, and a whole programme of poetic revival shapes itself out through the liberty accorded to the exaltation of feeling. And this rapture draws its sustenance from dramatic visions, from desolate moors where grow the yew and the sombre juniper tree; night, solitude and meditation throw a funereal harmony over this rugged setting. The spirit of Milton's *Penseroso*, and not

[1] 1722-1800; *Poems*, Chalmers, vol. xviii.
[2] See below, Book IV. chap. i. sect. 4.

that of the *Allegro*, gives the tone to all this landscape literature of the eighteenth century.

But Young[1] is at the source itself of the current of religious melancholy associated with problems of death and destiny; or at least, at the source of the literature which derives into secretly complacent expressions forces of energy a Puritanism of long standing would use up in spiritual torments and in acts of will.[2]

It is impossible not to connect this idea of conscious artistic exploitation, of half-insincerity, with the display of pessimistic sensibility which has given Young his unique place in English poetry. Only a narrow criticism, it is true, can stringently demand from the writer an explanation of all his moods, can search in his life for the actual counterpart and so to speak the justification of each sob; the artist's personality is a world apart, where experience and imagination commingle according to independent laws. The penetrating study in which George Eliot contrasts the Christian detachment of the *Night Thoughts* and the interested worldliness of their author only discloses a secret weakness at the cost of some malignity But it is none the less interesting to see, at the fountain-head of the Romanticism of grief, the artifice of an idealised and simplified attitude creating a kind of relative deception, which will be for Romanticism a vice analogous to that which for the classicists was the fictitious suppression of personality.

Self-expression with Thomson was still something discreet and indirect; with Young, self comes into the foreground. His work represents the real beginning of the literature of sensibility. Necessarily subjective in principle, it tends with all its might to bring about the overthrow of the barriers of intellectuality,

[1] Edward Young, born in 1683, in Hampshire, was the son of a cleric, studied at Oxford, threw in his lot with the Duke of Wharton, wrote tragedies (see Book II chap. iv. sect 4), satires, which preceded those of Pope (*The Love of Fame, The Universal Passion*, 1725-28), took orders (1727), and his various aims having more or less fallen through, he was appointed to the modest living of Welwyn, where he ended his days in the expectation of a Bishopric which never came He had married the daughter of the Duke of Lichfield; a series of family bereavements, together with the death of his wife, inspired *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality* (1741-45), the success of which was very great. He died in 1765. His *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759) make very liberal allowance for the originality of genius against rules *Poetical Works*, Aldine Edn, 1858. See G Eliot, *Essays*, 1884; J Texte, *Rousseau et le Cosmopolitisme Littéraire*, 1895; W. Thomas, *Le Poëte Ed. Young*, 1901.

[2] The fact must not be overlooked, however, that the success of *Pamela* in 1740 had popularised another expression of Puritan pathos. (See below, chap. iii. sect. 2)

measure, and order, as well as the general self-effacement, by which classicism limited, repressed and transposed the troubled, impatient flow of the inner life.

Young provides an outlet for this tumultuous tide. But he does not let it pour forth freely. Just as much as with Thomson, his is a double temperament, which by culture is bound up with tradition, at the same time as instinct inclines it towards the future. The education of his art has been exclusively classical; the whole of his work belongs to the forms and spirit of the age of Pope. The powerful initiative of the *Night Thoughts* is wholly psychological by nature; the language, subservient to rules, is in no way renovated. The signs of a weakening inspiration, of a style that is cut off from its vital roots, the abstraction, the false and merely verbal intensity, come to spoil at every minute his most vigorous accents. An imperious discipline weighs upon his expression, contracting it, concentrating it, and giving to his poem an extreme and often obscure terseness; while on the other hand the discontinuity of thought is seen in the absence of any plan, and produces incessantly the impression of jerkiness, of themes taken up again, and of a broken line of development.

The *Night Thoughts* are a long meditation in nine cantos. Three successive bereavements have darkened the poet's soul; the nocturnal hours are in keeping with his sorrow; pensive and alone he abandons himself to the reflections it suggests; and it is a full treatise on life, death and immortality which thus issues from a personal emotion, displayed as it is beneath a light veil of reticence; the modesty of private life is still too strong, and so fictitious names serve to design those who died. The development is more than didactic; it is controversial. The inconstancy and illusion of human happiness, the illogicalness of infidelity, the fecund certitudes of faith, such are the very orthodox doctrines that Young demonstrates with untiring zeal. An imaginary interlocutor lends a surface animation to his monologue. Through this rather pale personage, who seems to represent the spirit of the century, it is against the error of moral flippancy that Young raises the protestation of experience and good sense; and it is in the name of Reason that he upholds a rational thesis. The departed are evoked, one after another; a fund of bitterness felt everywhere confirms the sincerity of the Christian pessimism which is expressed; the lyrical setting of night and death is never

allowed to be forgotten; but the poem has only at moments the character of an effusion; it is a series of religious commonplaces and philosophical debates.

In this way it belongs to the family of reasoned arguments in verse which classicism extolled, and so differs in no way by its nature from Pope's *Essays on Man*. The wholly intellectual aridness of the discussion is not redeemed by the utilitarian quality, at bottom prosaic, of the ethics taught; it is increased by a language that is most often abstract, an elliptical syntax, and an awkwardness of expression. The nervous condensation alone of the idea sustains the interest through the impression of mental energy which it continually creates, and the very effort that it demands from the reader.

And yet, this very classical work has drawn to itself, absorbed, crystallised, all the aspirations after a vague Romanticism of sentiment which were floating in the consciousness of the age; it was a leaven to the fermenting revolution in literature. This influence it owes to the powerful suggestion of grief and mystery which it potentially contains, and which it represses for the most part, but allows to expand and operate in brief moments of escape. It opens up on the material night of the physical world, on the darkness that enshrouds destiny, on the mysterious Beyond, perspectives that have all the profoundness of Christianity. A Miltonian sublimity raises it at times as if on a sudden spread of wing. An age that was weary of optimism and reason was attracted by the strange sweetness of despair, but its principles still forbade the full indulgence of these delights; once bound up with the examination of the reasons for believing, crowned by the hope of salvation, this dangerous source of joy acquired an innocence, and became even praiseworthy; such is the chief cause of Young's success. The faith passively practised by indolent minds contained within it the power to move, to communicate tragic thrills; to Young it was given to actualise and spread the contagion of these imaginative stirrings. He was not a creator, but an eloquent populariser; and has his place among religious orators.

That is to say, he is not only a rhetorician. The communicative virtue of his emotion is made up of an undeniable sincerity. Whatever the inspiration of the *Night Thoughts*, or even their form, may have in the way of strong and new poetry, it is due

to the faculty of transposing abstract ideas into images; and the transposition is only rendered possible, here as elsewhere, by passionate feeling. The images thus invented are not original; they were not at that date, and they are infinitely less so to-day. The exterior setting of night, death and the tomb was already the common stock of religious writers; but profane literature has since made it banal. Still it cannot be denied that Young handles it in a personal way; he has a gift of ample, cosmic vision; unforeseen associations of terms, short striking turns of style that usually work themselves out into formulæ and proverbs, if not enigmas, but which also at times flash the most vivid illuminations upon the reader. And his line, jerky and stiff as it is, has an energy of touch, and sharp breaks of a powerful effectiveness.

There is scarcely any landscape work in the *Night Thoughts;* Nature is limited to a central setting, and some comparisons. But because of the affinity of the inner sentiment, Young's influence was immediately confounded with that of the descriptive poets. The set of romantic themes which is now being created is henceforth enlarged by nocturnal meditation and by pessimistic or religious melancholy, which associate themselves with stirring picturesque visions. Very extensive on the Continent, this action is to be felt in England, with all those whose temperament is not rebellious to the sensibility that is awakening.

The immediate echo of the *Night Thoughts* is to be heard in Blair,[1] whose poem offers the same commonplace ideas, an expression at times no less vigorous, together with the signs of a Puritan gravity that is more simple and less mixed with philosophical pretensions; and that already, in a naïve way, intensifies the use of the outer means destined to arouse funereal terrors. In a declamatory prose, and one which did not seem such to countless readers, James Hervey[2] also gives expression to identical emotions and thoughts; despite the difference of the form he adopts, he cannot be separated from this literary group.

With other writers, the particular theme with which Young is definitely associated is decidedly in the foreground, although it is not the dominant inspiration. Of such is Thomas Warton,[3]

[1] Robert Blair, 1699-1746; *The Grave*, 1743; *Poems*, Chalmers, vol. xv.
[2] James Hervey, 1714-58. His *Meditations among the Tombs*, 1745-47, reached the 25th edn. before the end of the century.
[3] 1728-90; *The Pleasures of Melancholy*, written in 1745, published in 1747.

whose early poem translates in an impetuous language the fusion which a flight of sensibility achieves between the "pleasures" of Nature and those of "melancholy."

One could further connect with this group the expressions of a poetry of religious sentiment verging, either towards mysticism, as in John Byrom,[1] the disciple of Law, who wrote a "poetical essay" in praise of "enthusiasm"; or towards an instinctive symbolism, as in Christopher Smart,[2] whose *Song to David* is a strange masterpiece, of a striking and somewhat disturbing imaginative intensity, with moments of ecstatic ardour, of passionate naïveness, that make one think of Blake; or again, the Scottish talent of John Logan,[3] whose lyricism, of short breath but sincere feeling, adds variations to a common background of elegiac melancholy, and with whom this spontaneity at times creates accents of a relatively simpler language.[4]

4. *Imagination: the Past, Ruins.*—After sentiment has interwoven itself with the Nature of everyday surroundings, then with the sombre dramatic aspects of human destiny as well as of landscape, it is attracted towards the objects that affect, not the senses directly, but imagination through these. The development of imaginative perception is a necessary stage in the very progress of sensibility. The mental images suggested by concrete stimuli are a source of powerful and fecund emotion, and the need to feel is very quickly led to put it to contribution. The deepest stirrings of the soul are those which it creates out of its own substance.

The objects capable of awakening these inner reactions are above all those which possess an implicit eloquence; the signs, or symbols, of an absent reality. Among these are the relics of the Past—monuments, legends, works of art. On the other hand, it happens that the Past has a force of attraction in itself; it then can satisfy the longing of a consciousness that is ill-satisfied with the Present. A period of psychological transition will necessarily reveal this character. The rebirth of sentiment springs from an instinctive desire for renovation and moral refreshment; it tends to re-exercise spiritual faculties that have been slumbering. The obscure belief of having formerly experienced their constant and

[1] 1692-1763; *Poems*, Chalmers, vol. xv.
[2] 1722-70; *A Song to David*, 1763, *Poems*, Chalmers, vol. xvi.
[3] 1748-88; *Poems*, Chalmers, vol. xviii.
[4] See for example the *Ode Written in a Visit to the Country in Autumn.*

beneficial activity is an essential element of the knowledge that this age has of itself. The intuition on the one hand of an impoverishment of the national soul, brought about by a century of exclusive rationalism, and on the other, of the necessity to return to former modes of being, the actual memory of which still pulsates and throbs in the life of these times, such is the general condition of English sensibility which is daily becoming more pronounced, and the progress of which is the main support of the change in literature.

These former modes of sensibility are projected by the Present into a vague Past, and associated with all that is distant, different, contrary—with all that classicism was accustomed to despise. The years of romance when the chivalrous spirit of the novels of adventure held sway, the Gothic times when faith built up the great cathedrals, in a word the whole of the Middle Ages, shine with a sovereign attraction. To bring their image back again, is to resuscitate the sentiments which animated them, is to revive them, and with them one's self. Thus the mental rhythm was already inclining hearts towards the Past; it called for a vast recommencement; and the relics of the nation's Past come to have a privileged place among the influences which imagination most willingly obeys.

These relics are in the first place the buildings of antiquated style, anterior to the Renaissance, and to the architectural taste imitated from the Ancients. The subconscious reaction against classicism conceives a love for the Gothic, and this epithet, which only recently was still an opprobrium, now by degrees becomes a term of pious affection. In particular, the ruins of monuments left to themselves and almost forming a part of Nature appeal, not only to the feeling for the Past, but to that of the picturesque as to that of landscape; the success in literature of the old abbeys is plainly seen before the middle of the century; they win first place in the favour of the poets before the strongholds and all the appurtenances of feudalism have their turn.

Not less full of this spirit of the Past are the legends and popular traditions. Their value lies in a naïve simplicity of character which contradicts the artificial refinement of pseudo-classical art; their rhythmic forms, and above all the ballads, will rank among the most forceful of the excitants of Pre-Romanticism. But the prestige of fashionable and polished literature

keeps this awakening sympathy in the background; at a slightly later date it will force itself into prominence.

A speedier victory comes to the national writers, from Chaucer to Milton, whose fame from 1660 onwards had suffered a partial eclipse, and who despite the discipline of their form appear to offer, as against the classical models, a lesson in independence. Already before 1750 the tragic appeal of Shakespeare is almost universally admired; Milton benefits by all the revival of respect, if not of zeal, which the middle-class shows to Puritan austerity, and the versification of his great poems is an example that is more and more copied. But it is Spenser's wealth of imagination which perhaps excites the keenest enthusiasm among the innovators.

Finally, in the play of imagery there are stimulating influences which originate from within; such as the notions that correspond to absent objects, removed in space, and which owe it to their intrinsic quality not to be indifferent. Foreign lands and peoples, exotic settings, are not directly seen; but the ideas they stir up, which are added to by the descriptions of travellers, provide a valuable means of finding relief to the need for sensation and emotion. Exoticism, the traces of which in English literature are always and to tell the truth everywhere recognisable, will scarcely flourish on a large scale until towards the last three decades of the century; but already at the time of Gray its attraction is being felt, chiefly in the form of a Northern or Scandinavian ideal, which by opposing the Latin and French poles of classical influences marks with increasing distinctness an artistic and moral conflict in progress. The magnetism of this new force of inspiration is due no doubt to the fact that certain hidden elements of the national originality are gradually becoming alive to their own existence.

These diverse themes call forth and beget one another; they tend to form an organic whole; they constitute, at the very heart of the age of Johnson, the psychological substance of an incipient Romanticism. Incapable as yet of creating for itself an adequate form, this renewed inspiration can only express itself through the channels of a literature of transition. But its inner elements continue to assume more definite shape and acquire a richer quality, while the apparent signs of its progress accumulate as time goes on. Towards 1770, one can speak of Pre-Romanticism.

Before this date, it is better to look upon a Collins or a Gray as the most complete representative, at this provisional stage, of the poetry of sentiment.

Their work shows us the fusion of the successive themes which go to make up this poetry. To the love of Nature and melancholy is added that of the Past, the attraction of Ruins, the curious desire for the erudite knowledge of bygone times, the sense of archaism; the exercise of imagination, in a word, is intimately united to that of sensibility; and as images are not sought after for themselves, but for the virtue of their emotional appeal, one can say that a subtle shade of emotion, namely "wonder," comes to add itself to the range of affective states which poetry aims at calling to life. It is by means of this diffuse quality that we can define the new contribution of this last group to a movement which in other respects they only illustrate as a whole.

The illustration, if one may so term it, is as yet imperfect, held in check by the resistance of an accepted literary tradition. The poetical fecundity of wonder accompanied with emotion does not wholly reveal itself, for this sentiment is far from attaining its full intensity. But within the limits of an art which a persisting classicism renders sober, and of which it also in a way paralyses the expression, one can already perceive the mental foundation of the coming literature: it is a group of tendencies organised round a central aspiration which makes for a return to an anti-intellectual and older type of inner life, a type which is felt to be more truly and more spontaneously national.

5. *Collins, Gray, etc.*—The poetry of Collins [1] is of rare and precious quality. His work is small, being prematurely and

[1] William Collins, born at Chichester in 1721, of a middle-class commercial family, studied at Oxford, and displayed a certain anxiety of character, the sign perhaps already of mental instability; published while yet at the University his *Persian Eclogues* (1744); then came his *Verses to Sir Thomas Hanmer on His Edition of Shakespeare's Works*, 1743. Renouncing a Church career, he decided to be a poet, dreamed of the theatre, of historical works, of a translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*; in 1747 appeared the *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects*, and the death of Thomson drew from his pen another Ode (1749). Discouraged by public indifference and material worries, he was saved from penury by a legacy in 1749, but fell a victim to nervous depression which, at moments, bordered on insanity. He died in 1759, leaving behind an unfinished ode *On the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland Considered as the Subject of Poetry*, published in 1788. *Poems*, ed. by Stone, 1907; see also *Poetical Works, with Memoir*, ed. by Moy Thomas (Aldine Poets), 1892; ed. W. C. Bronson, 1898; *Poetical Works of Gray and Collins*, ed. by A. Lane Poole, 1918.

tragically interrupted. It is unequal, still encumbered by passive habits, and formal conventions; the effort of a young and fresh inspiration upon a classical language and classical methods gives to his expression, on the other hand, something strained and at times obscure. But he infuses new life into the ode; and without leaving the contemporary plane of poetry, he re-creates it by the fervour of his genius in lyrical moments of perfect sweetness.

If his flights are weighted down by a matter that is heavy or dead, the reason is that invention with him has to work in an artificial setting. He does not claim freedom of choice in his subjects, the tradition of the pindaric ode forces itself upon him; and although he retains only the more summary elements, and constructs stanzas that are for the most part regular and simple, yet he does not dare to give himself up to the pure effusion which his temperament would fain desire. And so his lines are laden with allegories, while he personifies abstractions without ceasing. His style is not immune from dross, such as banal epithets, false elegance, traces of a pseudo-philosophical vocabulary intended to heighten the idea by means of a generality and a nobility that are wholly exterior.

But the dominant impression is that of a vital sincerity. The odes of Collins are full of a diffuse feeling for Nature; he looks up to Thomson with affection and respect; his evocations of landscapes are brief, and he does not seek them out for themselves; they only offer a harmonious setting for the idea and the emotion. The atmosphere of melancholy pervades all his work; it springs from a spontaneous sensibility, and Young's influence only came to give definite shape to certain themes. The note of Collins's inspiration is elegiac; tenderness breathes in his lines (*Ode to Pity*), and the uncertainty of what lies beyond, the thrill of death, connect him with the night and graveyard school. Even the national note, the serious pride in English liberty, so characteristic of a poetry that is both middle-class and moralising, can be found in his verse (*Ode to Liberty*).

He has these elements in common with others. His most original characteristic, and one in which he marks a new enriching of sentimental poetry, is the imaginative idealisation of emotion. The taste for ruins, for the Past, the instinctive cult of wonder, are everywhere in evidence. Collins was in contact, in sympathy with Joseph and Thomas Warton; his admiration and homage

are for Milton and Spenser (*Ode on the Poetical Character*). The ode on the *Passions* expresses pagan regrets that announce the longing of a Keats; the ode *On the Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland,* and their fecundity for the artist, is a marvellous intuition of the future of poetry. The feeling for exoticism had already revealed itself in his first poems, the *Persian Eclogues,* which he himself judged severely, and which are indeed, despite charming details, very imperfect attempts in verse.

These efforts, these curiosities and these symptoms are still in truth superficial. The deepest of his individual gifts is the faculty of feeling and of transmitting the subtle sensation of mystery; a faculty for suggestion and symbol, the most essentially romantic of all, and the power of which in the case of Collins is intimately bound up with the troubled unrest of his hallucinated, almost morbid mind. It is here that at his epoch he stands without a rival. And this unique quality is not found above all in the *Ode to Fear*—where it is directly expressed—despite the strangeness of certain accents, and the bold impressionism which translates a vague sense of terror by means of happily chosen correspondences of images and sounds; but in the pure masterpieces, and supremely in the *Ode to Evening,* the most delicately exquisite of eighteenth century poems; where a pensive colouring, rich in subdued restrained vibrations, spread out over the landscape as over the meditative mind that contemplates it, fuses in so harmonious a manner the charm of twilight, the paling lights, the oncoming silence and gloom, all that the hour holds of happy and foreboding intent, into one suggestion of a mysterious eloquence.

Here again the language is learned, wholly steeped in literary memories, but of a natural spontaneous grace; and the classical instrument is handled with a subtlety of feeling that is quite modern. It is in this way that Collins has at times rejuvenated the form of poetry; a very fine sense of word values, a musical perception of their expressive force, give them an appropriateness, a freshness, a force of suggestion, that seem to renew them. He has in a pure inspiration the supreme gift of simplicity; it is not yet the simplicity at once moral and verbal of Wordsworth: Collins's vocabulary remains laboured, and the *Ode to Simplicity* does not fulfil all its promise. But where this classicism is perfect, it is sufficiently spiritualised by an inner youthfulness of spirit to rejoin Romanticism in its moments of soberness. The rhythms

are adapted to the sentiment with a very sure intuition, which presages the freedom of the future. And even allegory with Collins takes on a new aspect; his personifications do not remain abstract; he enlivens them with an imaginative vitality that is happily and delicately shaded, lends them traits he has borrowed from reality, and shows them in movement and action. Through selection and tact, his descriptive and psychological art succeeds in creating a beauty that is strong, original and fine, although a trifle difficult.

Gray[1] is closely allied to Collins, and yet differs from him. Fate has decreed that he should be seen in the perspective of his rival, whom he overshadowed during his lifetime, but whose lyrical quality he does not quite equal.

Gray is also a transitional poet; but not in the same way. With Collins a new inspiration actually reconciles itself, although not always happily, with modes of thought and expression of former times; these contrary elements are not reduced to unity; there subsists something unsettled, and some want of balance. With Gray the groups of tendencies are not in the same relationship; one of them, incontestably, imposing its law upon the other. Gray's talent is primarily disciplined. A scrupulous artist, conscientious and delicate to the extreme, his desire was to realise, in all he wrote, both the harmony of tone and the perfection of form.

He therefore obeyed the dominant preoccupation of a laboured art; and as such an effort demands the mastery of self, a lucid attention, the care of detail, it would not be averse to

[1] Thomas Gray, born in London, in 1716, was the son of a broker, studied at Eton, then came to Cambridge where he spent most of his life as a scholar in semi-seclusion, at Peterhouse and Pembroke. In 1739-41 he travelled on the Continent with Horace Walpole, admired the Alps and visited the Grande Chartreuse. His first poem dates from 1742; *An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, begun about 1745, appeared in 1750 and brought him fame. It was again published in the *Six Poems* (1753), followed by the *Odes* of 1757, which include *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*. His historical and scholarly studies are reflected in *The Fatal Sisters* and *The Descent of Odin* (new edn. of *Poems*, 1768). Gray travelled as a tourist, visited notably Scotland and the Lake district, and compiled a diary of his impressions Appointed to the Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge, he composed a last official ode, and died in 1771 The collection of his *Letters* is extremely interesting *Works*, ed by Gosse, 1884; *Selected Poems*, ed. by Gosse, 1895; *English Poems*, ed by Tovey, 1898; ed by Charles, 1914; *Poems Published in 1768*, ed. by Bell, 1916, *Poetical Works of Gray and Collins*, ed by Lane Poole, 1918; *Letters*, ed by Tovey, 1900-1912, *Correspondence of Gray, Walpole, West, Ashton*, ed by Toynbee, 1915; *Essays and Criticisms*, ed by Northup, 1911. See Gosse, *Gray* (English Men of Letters), 1889, Sir L. Stephen, *Gray* (in *Dictionary of National Biography*); Northup, *A Bibliography of Thomas Gray*, 1917.

the reality of things to see there, in the plenitude and truth of the term, a classical effort. The poetry of Gray abounds in all the seeds of the coming age; it is wholly animated by emotions which around it are preparing the rejuvenation of literature. To this yet obscure work, it has contributed as much as any other. But it is revolutionary with a wise prudence that, far from denying the established order of things, rather keeps it up, and even prolongs it into the innovations of the future.

So remarkable is the stamp of this character upon his verse, that one might recognise in it an intermediary art, a mixed and perhaps a true classicism. The slender inspiration of Gray has produced some exquisite fruits; because, already profiting from the rise of the new sap, it retains the benefit of a learned and refined culture. The reasoning aridness of classical poetry is here, by an inner progress, enriched and made more mellow; the luxuriance and uncertainty of Romanticism are neutralised in advance by the authority of choice and taste, that still remains sovereign. A poetry such as this makes one feel what is lacking in the excessive intellectuality of the age of Pope; by mastering and sublimating emotional impulses in a sober form, it approximates, both in spirit and in letter, to an ideal classicism, one that would represent discipline without impoverishment; it suggests the memory of the masterpieces which have seemed at times to achieve this distinction.

To Gray belongs the honour of recalling, in certain of his accents, the delicate and fine felicity of a Vergil or a Racine. But the perspective would be false that would place him, as an eclectic and supreme genius, almost at the summit of English poetry. Critics fond above all of measure and balance, like Matthew Arnold, may have crushed him under such an honour. He does not possess the necessary creative force to fuse together the contrary impulses of romantic spontaneity and classical lucidity, without lowering the standard of either, and while sustaining both at their highest possible pitch; the wearing psychological effort of such a synthesis is beyond him. In fact, Gray's art does not dominate the conflict of tendencies; he makes a choice and takes a side; he clearly settles down with the friends of discipline and order. Only at brief intervals is he truly a conciliator; and he purchases this noble ambition, these sparse successes, at the cost of semi-sterility.

His work, however small it be, is divided into two unequal parts. Most of these short poems are circumstantial compositions, in accordance with the type bequeathed to the eighteenth century by the Restoration; they range from light playful verse to the pindaric ode; develop commonplaces, teem with allegories, and personify all the virtues and all the vices. At first sight, therefore, the matter would appear to be little else than artificial and mediocre; and indeed the manner is not without bearing the marks of a thought that is readily general and abstract, and of a search for an elegance towards which too many precursors had opened the way. But Gray's style, in his least personal moments, is never banal; it is always saved from pure passivity by a concern for propriety and accuracy; it has always at least a surface polish. To this negative quality is most often added an inner distinction; and at times, a compactness, a force of energy, which lend an inevitable character to the expression. Gray abounds in striking passages; to more than one idea he has given its definitive perfection. The close attention to the chastened merit of the form is further evidenced in a very careful construction, and in an exquisite sense of proportion and order.

And this extremely attentive art guides a sincere inspiration without stifling it. Whatever the theme, Gray knows how to vest it with the grace of true sensibility. His visions of Nature are discreet, pretty rather than fresh and new; but if in his poetry he is hardly the disciple of Thomson, he is in immediate harmony with the school of Young. Melancholy with him is something constitutional; his note of tenderness has a winning sweetness. And his imagination is active; it delights in adumbrating symbols; it perceives the hidden relations in things. Thus it is that Gray's classical poetry contains within itself effects of subtle fitness and suggestion which announce Romanticism; he has discovered rhythms, utilised the power of sounds, and even created evocations. The triumph of this sensibility allied to so much art is to be seen in the famous *Elegy,* which from a somewhat reasoning and moralising emotion has educed a grave, full, melodiously monotonous song, in which a century weaned from the music of the soul tasted all the sadness of eventide, of death, and of the tender musing upon self.

The other group is connected with a research and disquietude that are more consciously innovating. There is in Gray a vein of

erudition and archæology; he was one of the first to feel the attraction of the Middle Ages and of Scandinavian antiquity. At the British Museum, which was then just opening, he read old texts; he dreamed of a history of English poetry, which Thomas Warton was destined to write. *The Bard*, and especially *The Fatal Sisters* and *The Descent of Odin*, composed before the publication of Percy's collection, are, as it were, soundings taken in the ocean of mediæval superstition, of primitive legends and beliefs, of simple and popular wonders, the depth and fecundity of which were about to be gradually revealed. The part played by the refrain in the first two pieces, the rough conciseness of the last, are artistic intuitions remarkable at this date.

All this is of rather slender bulk. But there is, in addition, a man in Gray, whom only his letters disclose in his entirety. Here one enjoys the charm of a real spontaneousness, that is witty without effort; of an affectionate nature, made for friendship; susceptible, as well, to the comic side of things; free from any Puritan narrowness, and on the lookout for the picturesque trait; nervous and feminine, one would like to say, endowed with a lovable and simple grace; in no wise insular, but fashioned by travel and study, open to the appreciation of French classics as well as to an inquisitive taste for the archaic and the "Gothic." The literary opinions of which these letters are full form one of their principal attractions. Above all, they give to the feeling for landscape a franker and more complete expression than that which is found in the poems; and one is astonished to read, at a date so early as 1739, about the sublimity of the Alps, and the religious horror of high mountains, effusions which outdistance the stage marked by Thomson in the progress towards the love of wild Nature. The diary of the journey to the English Lake district of thirty years later, is full of an intelligent and precise passion for the nobility and austerity of the horizons that Wordsworth was later to love. The modernity of these impressions is surprising; but they retain a soberness of line, even in the noting of the most indeterminate flights of the soul, which is the especial mark of Gray.

After Collins and Gray must be mentioned poets of less talent, in whom there dominates such or such an element of their complex

inspiration. A first group would be formed with Shenstone and Jago,[1] whose most characteristic trait is a cult of Nature, that is realistic and at the same time tender.

Not that Shenstone is the man of one theme only; he tried his hand at many, without ever finding himself decisively. None of his contemporaries better shows us the absolute inability of feeling at this date to renew the means of expression. *The Schoolmistress* is a piece of playfulness, begun with an intention of irony, and of which the subject has by degrees won over the poet's sympathy; for if there is humour in Shenstone, and a verve that is at times broad, there is a still greater fund of sentimentalism. But his imitation of Spenser, suggested by a sincere admiration, ends in a rather awkward pastiche. His taste for rusticity announces Cowper and Wordsworth through some of its intuitive aspects; he beautifies his country retreat of the Leasowes with innumerable artificial ornaments, without losing his susceptibility to the power of free Nature; nor is his *Pastoral Ballad* devoid of descriptive grace. But it is in vain that he praises simplicity, and desires it: this quality is most obviously lacking in his diction and his style; his short poems are encumbered with the trash of a degenerate classicism. . . .

There is still much convention, but at the same time more true spontaneity in his friend and correspondent, Jago, a country pastor, who describes to us in four books the landscape as it appears at four successive periods of the day from the same top (*Edge-Hill*). This poem of a moralising character, written in a nerveless blank verse, is bathed by a fresh welling inspiration, the love of the soil, of familiar horizons; and despite the rebellious aridness of the form, it owes some alluring sweetness to this running stream.

In the work of two Scots writers, Mickle and Home,[2] the revived feeling for Nature can be seen, commingling with the zeal for the archaic, the mediæval imagination. The first is frankly an imitator, who, when he follows Gray, is only mediocre; but when it is Spenser whom he takes as his model, he touches

chords of a rather happy although frankly modern note. The second, to-day forgotten, owes to the national subject which he treated in his *Douglas* one of the greatest successes in drama of the century; his declamatory dialogues leave his play the merit of action, and above all that of poetry.

Finally, the poems of Goldsmith,[1] which won the praise of Gray, have remained popular, for their inspiration, which fuses sentimentality, melancholy, the love for Nature and a simple life, the taste for exoticism, and the evocations of countries and peoples, with moral and political themes after the style of Johnson, had a deep appeal for a nation that was formerly agricultural, but that was already feeling the strain of a swift and unforeseen industrial change. Here again the newly acquired tenderness of the poetry does not break the paralysing spell that holds the language fast. But Goldsmith had in him the natural instinct of an elegiac rhythm, and he knew how to harmonise the cadence of his verse with the emotion which he proposed to call forth.

To be consulted: Beers, *History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, 1899; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. x. chaps, v. vi. vii. x.; Courthope, *History of English Poetry*, vol. v., 1905; O. Doughty, *The English Malady of the Eighteenth Century* (Review of Engl. Studies, July 1926); Farley, *Scandinavian Influences on the English Romantic Movement*, 1903; Gosse, *History of Eighteenth Century Literature*, 1889; idem, *Gray* (English Men of Letters), 1887; R. Haferkorn, *Gotik und Ruine in der englischen Dichtung des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1924; R. D. Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry*, 1922; H. G. de Maar, *A History of Modern English Romanticism; I: Elizabethan and Modern Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, 1925; E. W. Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England*, 1925; Millar, *The Mid-Eighteenth Century*, 1902; Morel, *James Thomson*, 1895; Mornet, *Le Sentiment de la Nature en France de Rousseau à Bernardin de Saint-Pierre*, 1907; Morton, *The Spenserian Stanza in the 18th Century* (*Modern Philology*, Jan., 1913); Phelps, *The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement*, 1893; A. L. Reed, *The Background of Gray's Elegy*, 1924; Myra Reynolds, *The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry between Pope and Wordsworth*, 1912; Seccombe, *The Age of Johnson*, 1900; Thomas, *Le Poète Edward Young*, 1901; Van Tieghem, *La Poésie de la Nuit et des Tombeaux en Europe au XVIII^e Siècle*, 1921.

[1] See below, chap. iii. sect. 3. *The Traveller*, 1764; *The Deserted Village*, 1770.

CHAPTER III

THE NOVEL OF SENTIMENT

1. *The Middle-Class Spirit and the Novel.*—The novel of the time of Johnson is renewed in a more efficient and more complete manner than the poetry by the spirit of the middle class, that instrument of the inevitable moral transformation. The poetry is the slave of an ancient form, which classicism has carried to a high degree of perfection; it puts up a very strong resistance to the desire for innovation, and only accepts the change in inspiration by veiling it in a customary and persistent style of writing. On the contrary, the novel is a still amorphous kind; if its first sources lie in the distant past, it only now reaches its full growth; even with De Foe it has not completed its development. New matter can all the better accommodate itself to this elastic framework, as prose is a mode of expression of unlimited suppleness.

Above all, there is a deep affinity between the dominant instincts of the middle classes, and this branch of literature, the possibilities of which have remained intact. It lends itself better than any other to ethics and sentiment. After having formerly represented allegorical or ideal visions, it tends more and more to become a picture of life. The middle-class mind would have this picture real, because it has a firm hold upon reality, and cannot break itself away from it. Thus realism will come to find its most favourable field in the novel. But a real picture will arouse the same vital reactions as life itself; it will beget a mood of reflectiveness applied to conduct, and will tell upon the resolution to behave well; it will be animated by moralising intentions; and in order to set these working, it will have recourse to feelings.

Nothing is therefore more natural than to see one of the creators of the modern English novel, Richardson, seeking his inspiration in Puritan sentimentalism. He has hardly written, ere realism, treating itself in its turn as an end, sets up against his example an example that is openly contradictory; from this

reaction there issues a movement, and Fielding also has a following. But the sentimental novel continues to develop; and after having furnished a convenient expression for the desire to soften hearts with a view to edifying, it will come, in the work of a Sterne, to satisfy the quest of a voluptuous gratification in the seeking after emotion for its own sake.

2. *Richardson.*—Richardson[1] is not less than De Foe a representative of the average middle class. It is not only the semi-aristocratic class of rich merchants, but that of the traders and artisans, who find in him their spokesman. Thus another and a decisive step is taken towards the conquest of literature by the original instincts of the British nation; if the mass by far the most numerous, the common people, is still excluded from exercising any influence in the domain of letters, the social groups whose thought from now onwards makes itself felt are in immediate contact with this mass, and share its main inspirations. The surroundings from which Richardson comes are already very similar to those from which Dickens will come.

It is from this national and almost plebeian sap that he draws all his strength. This innovator did not deliberately wish to be an artist. No one has ever created a new form, or placed upon a form in course of development a stamp of finished realisation, with surer intuition and less lucidity. The subject matter of Richardson's novels is impersonal; it is the permanent fund of Puritan tradition, brought again to light by the combined action of the moral rhythm and social causes. The impulse to write in this case is nothing else than the need of explaining an edifying theme; without going further back than the modern age inaugurated by the reign of Charles II., the allegory of Bunyan, the

[1] Samuel Richardson, born in Devon in 1689, was the son of a joiner, followed his family to London, received a simple education and was apprenticed to a printer, whose daughter he married, set up in business for himself and was successful. The compiling of a collection of model letters for the various circumstantial happenings in life led him to write his first novel, *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), the success of which was immediate. Then appeared *Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady* (1747-8); and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-4). His reputation brought him into contact with social and literary circles, and he made many feminine friendships. He published two collections of *Maxims or Meditations* taken from his novels, and died in 1761, leaving a voluminous correspondence (ed. by Mrs. Barbauld, 1804). *Novels*, ed. by L. Stephen, 1883; with *Life* by Phelps, 1901-3. See Diderot, *Eloge de Richardson*, 1761; J. Texte, *Rousseau et les origines du cosmopolitisme littéraire*, 1895; Schmidt, *Richardson, Rousseau und Goethe*, 1875; biographies and studies by C. Thomson, 1900; A. Dobson (English Men of Letters), 1902; Canby, "Pamela Abroad" (*Modern Language Notes*, vol. xviii., 1903).

essay of Steele, and the novel of De Foe had all represented, in various ways, the successive efforts of this pent-up fund of inspiration to break out through the rational plane of the literature in vogue. Richardson only adds to this tradition the all-powerfulness of a triumphant sentimentalism, allied to the utilitarian concern in matters of conduct, and in close accord with it.

The form is newer; but it is the luck of a genius who is led by the instinct of his creative forces. The problem as to what models Richardson could have followed remains obscure; despite striking analogies in the subject matter and even some resemblance in tone, he does not appear to have been inspired by the *Marianne* of Marivaux;[1] and the picaresque novel of Le Sage was of too free a cynicism not to wound him. As for the choice of an exposition by way of letters, it was not absolutely original, nor was it intentional; *Pamela* grew from a collection of epistolary patterns meant for humble folks; and Richardson himself had been too early practised in the style not to be drawn to it by a natural bent.

The most likely conjecture, therefore, is that of a dramatic action which springs from an edifying theme, and develops through a series of successive epistles, under the guiding idea of an allegory in the manner of Bunyan. Such a view, which reduces to a minimum the part of any literary intention in the genesis of *Pamela*, is confirmed by the hesitant art of this first novel, in which one feels that the author is only finding his way as he writes. Lastly, his realism does not require explanation; the example of *Gil Blas* or of *Marianne* was not necessary in order to incite Richardson to adhere closely to a detailed view of things, or to situate the greater part of his plot among the lower classes of society. Realism can have the most diverse of origins; here it owes nothing to the classical spirit, to the desire for truth in itself, a desire actuated either by an intellectual taste or by a scientific scruple of the writer. As with De Foe, it issues from the concrete tendencies of middle-class thought, from an attention directed towards facts by a strong utilitarianism, that is further strengthened by moral and religious sentiment. In describing with passionate minuteness certain aspects of the

[1] For the affirmative thesis see G. C. Macaulay, *Modern Language Review*, viii. (Oct. 4, 1913), and for the negative, R. S. Crane, *Modern Philology*, vol. xvi., Jan., 1919; *Modern Language Review*, Jan., 1922.

humble world in which a maidservant moves, Richardson reviews an aspect of reality that he knows, and that his presumed readers will themselves know; above all, he obeys the inevitable discipline of a Puritan imagination, for which the least important details of the setting wherein is enacted the destiny of a soul owe an infinite value to such a stake, and to the influence that they are able to exert upon the event.

This art of description, therefore, only converges in appearance with one of the directions which the principle of classicism could urge it to follow. As a matter of fact, the realism of Richardson is not animated by the classical spirit, and moves away from it. Besides it is very limited; in its sentimentalism, it emphasises certain elements of reality, and neglects others, while in several essential respects it tends towards idealism. As the material world interests it much less than souls, and only in the measure in which it inclines them to good or to evil, the psychological analysis alone develops quite freely; each cranny of the heart is sounded with the clear-sightedness of the moralist; and this would not in itself be contrary to the main preoccupation of classical writers, if a set preference of and search for the emotional feelings did not incline the analysis towards tenderness in pathos and edification, instead of towards clear understanding and knowledge. Similarly, in place of the cynical crudeness towards which the courage of the intellectual searcher after truth was readily attracted, we have here a taste that is severely docile —or that wants to be so—to the rules of delicacy.

At bottom, these rules are not fully respected; and this is the effect of a creation that has been stimulated by a vigorous instinct, and in which the element of the subconscious acts and reveals itself with relative independence. The account of Pamela's long struggle against a violence which at times becomes singularly precise is not of an irreproachable moral quality. And the lesson itself of the book is ambiguous, as soon as one leaves the extremely simple conventions of a sermonising psychology. The virtue of the heroine resembles too closely a calculated skilfulness for the reader not to perceive the secret which she hides from herself. In constructing this personage, Richardson was guided by the irresistible intuition of the organic whole which constitutes character; unknowingly, he has given her the implicit utilitarian qualities of a Puritan temperament devoid of nobleness. The

clear thinking, the cleverness, the trickery even which Pamela displays everywhere else, exclude the possibility of an innocence either complete, or fully disinterested. Another excess, where is revealed an artificial morality, imposed upon human nature like some rigid constraint, and claiming to reduce it all to a simple infallible effort, is that of Sir Charles Grandison, who has become the symbol of the pedantry of perfection.

The ethics of *Clarissa Harlowe* are on a higher plane; and a purified inspiration animates the masterpiece of Richardson. The Christian renunciation of life and happiness, the acceptance of sacrifice, are here displayed with an ardour that is sincere enough to veil the cherished hope of supernatural rewards. The idealism of sorrow attains an almost serene quality; and the emotion that radiates from this painstakingly cruel drama is infectious, until the moment when the death of the heroine is too lengthily and complacently exploited. On the whole, pathos is the central characteristic, the eminent merit of the book. The action is wholly absorbed by it; just as in *Pamela* it is concentrated in the duel between two rival wills—if one passes over the additional and rather thankless story of Pamela's married bliss.

Richardson's talent is made for this austere concentration of interest, which recalls the sermon and the religious allegory; the more complicated plot of *Sir Charles Grandison* seems in comparison to be loose and less strong It is through the unity of the emotion that *Clarissa Harlowe* preserves a superior artistic value; it is also through its pathos that the work had an irresistible hold over the English and European public. Born of the resolution of a conscience that applies all its effort to the supreme task of salvation, this power of crushing to the utmost limit the sympathetic fibres of the heart is Richardson's triumph in literature.

Along with the sombre dramatic force of Puritanism, this art has also its very keen desire for spiritual clear-sightedness, within the bounds of a purely moral analysis, that is directed by the need for safety and health, rather than by that for truth. The psychological realism is therefore here of a particular nature; but inside its limits it is sincere and effective. The light which Richardson throws upon the deep secrets of consciousness, the working of passions, the struggle of instincts, which his settled belief classes unhesitatingly into the categories of good and evil,

has its value for our knowledge of the human heart, in that it reaches the obscure regions, and lends a singular relief to the slightest detail. And it happens that this light becomes more audacious, more revealing, than Richardson himself, according to all appearance, would have desired.

Among the most interesting moments in his work are those in which the artist and the psychologist, escaping from the tutelage of the moralist, actually come to recover their independence, if they do not claim it. The characters in these novels are conceived with the object of serving an action; any importance, any individual life they may receive outside of this rigorous end in view constitute a breach of the law of their existence. Now Richardson has in him a pure faculty of artistic creation, by which at times he has allowed himself to be carried away. Through the effect of a logic that has then been freed from all constraint, his personages acquire the fullness, the consistency, the picturesque particularity, of a realism which is no longer that of moral intention, but of concrete truth or æsthetic intensity.

That Lovelace, whose figure of a seducer is exaggerated by a kind of Satanic perversity, should develop into a superhuman creature, and the symbol of a divided soul in which evil triumphs, has in itself nothing which can yet wound the Puritan principles of the author; and it is the religious imagination which here destroys the sense of the real. But elsewhere, reality itself is enforced at the expense of the simplicity demanded by an edifying art. Pamela is very much alive; she has some roguishness and coquetry; so that the naïveness of her innocence loses not a little thereby. A finer and more supple notion of feminine purity, on the contrary, permits Clarissa and her friend to show a piquant naturalness, without losing anything either in dignity or in likelihood. The vigour of touch with which are drawn some of the secondary figures, such as Mrs. Jewkes or the parents of Clarissa, is derived from a searching after effects of a distinctly literary order—a happy aim indeed. But the character of Charlotte Grandison is of too pleasing a spontaneity, too free and too irreverent, not to destroy the general tonality indispensable to the prestige of the hero. One might say that Richardson, obsessed by Fielding's success, has here wanted to rival the latter's verve, just as Fielding in his turn allowed himself to imitate the other's pathos. The artist has been successful, but not without compro-

mising the unity of emotion and doctrine in which the moralist and the novelist have each wanted to put the best of themselves.

The epistolary form, at first adopted without any deliberate choice, then retained by preference, has its drawbacks; it inclines to prolixity and repetition—the novels of Richardson are interminable; it does not allow of the simplicity of one unique outlook, entails the elimination of certain aspects of things, and almost of necessity gives much too great prominence to others. Of an artificial nature, it reconciles itself with a lively and dramatic action only at the cost of much improbability; and on several occasions Richardson has to replace the exchange of letters between his heroes by a "journal." But it is a form of writing that favours a concrete exposition, it can easily be allied with the minuteness of inner analysis, and by always allowing the account of the facts to be seen through a sensibility, it lends itself wonderfully to a plot that is coloured by emotion. On the other hand, by distributing the vision of things among several distinct points of view, it tends to a relativist philosophy that confronts and reconciles the diverse personal equations of parallel experiences. This tendency will develop in the *Humphry Clinker* of Smollett; it is already in evidence in Richardson, and limits the subjectivism of his sentimental method of expression.

The artist in him thus has his own power, and his own merits. The style, conscientious and slightly self-conscious, suggests that the writer is persevering rather than gifted; but the language has precision, energy, and at times a certain raciness.

The moral and literary figure of Richardson would not be complete, if one did not look for it all in the story of his life; and his correspondence, a trifle sermonising but full of interest, remains the best image of this. He should be pictured up as filling soberly, or with a serious playfulness, his part of adviser, of confessor almost, with his friends of both sexes; finding delight in the society of his lady admirers, reading out his works to them, giving them his opinion on all the detail of their existence; candidly practising his ethics and his sentimentalism; and on the whole, despite rather frequent traces of narrowness or morbidity, maintaining without too much artifice, throughout the episodes of a successful writer's life who can also be a trifle jealous and irritable, an attitude which probably to him did not any longer differ from perfect sincerity.

The influence of Richardson in Europe is an important chapter of comparative literature. In France, in Germany, and in all the countries in which the contagion of sentimentalism is awakening, he has favoured it with all the force of his pathos. Diderot was enthusiastic in his praise of the author of *Clarissa Harlowe;* Rousseau was indebted to him for the general inspiration of the *Nouvelle Héloïse;* and the *Werther* of Goethe in certain respects is part of his spiritual posterity.

3. *Goldsmith: "The Vicar of Wakefield."*—The success of the sentimental novel is deep and lasting; but Richardson does not immediately find a continuator worthy to succeed him. His influence is mixed with a spirit rather different from his in the work of the sister of his great rival, Sarah Fielding,[1] whose *David Simple* is the naïve and moralizing account, at once realistic and emotional, of the journey of an upright soul through life. The *Peter Wilkins* of Robert Paltock[2] inclines sentimentalism strangely in the direction of a fanciful liberty of imagination.

With brilliant success the novel of Goldsmith,[3] *The Vicar of Wakefield,* renews the inspiration of sentiment, by bringing it nearer to the average human being, and by delivering it from a Puritan tension against which many temperaments will remain rebellious.

The pathos of Richardson really gave expression to the deepest needs of his own nature; but this expression remained indirect and veiled. With Goldsmith, the particular quality of a

[1] 1710-68; *David Simple,* 1744.

[2] 1697-1767; *Peter Wilkins,* 1750; new edit., 1925.

[3] Oliver Goldsmith, born in Ireland (1728), the son of a vicar, spent his youth in poverty and difficulties; was destined for the church; then adopted medicine; travelled on the Continent, and after a few years of wandering life he eked out a living still somewhat precarious, but full of hard work, as a writer in straitened circumstances and undertaking all sorts of tasks. While engaged in translations, critical articles, historical compilations, essays, etc., he published *An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe,* 1759; edited a periodical, *The Bee,* 1759; collected Chinese Letters under the title of *The Citizen of the World,* 1762. A poem, *The Traveller,* 1764, attracted sufficient notice to enable him to publish in 1766 a novel, completed some four years earlier, *The Vicar of Wakefield,* which was poorly appreciated at first, but destined to universal fame. For the stage he wrote a comedy, *The Good-Natured Man,* 1768, and this was received with a certain deference; then he published a new poem, *The Deserted Village,* 1770; produced another comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer,* 1773, which was a great success. He died in 1774, a victim of overwork and financial worry. *Works,* ed. by Gibbs, 1885-6; *The Bee,* ed. by Dobson, 1903; *The Citizen of the World,* ed. by Dobson, 1891; *The Vicar of Wakefield,* ed. by Doble, 1909; *New Essays by O. Goldsmith,* ed. by R. S. Crane, 1927. See the biographies and studies by Dobson (Great Writers), 1888; R. A. King, 1910; F. F. Moore, 1910; A. L. Sells, *Les Sources françaises de G.,* 1921; H. J. Smith, *O. G., Citizen of the World,* 1927.

soul is more directly revealed; sentimentalism more clearly brings out the inner relation which makes it tend to the entire confession of the self. And it is first in this way that it becomes more human. But, again, the personality which pours itself forth is much more normal; it has greater variety, and better represents the diverse traits which commingle in the physiognomy of the British middle classes. It tempers morality with playfulness, emotion with humour. By virtue of his Irish adaptability, Goldsmith, after Steele, develops and fixes the type of a genial cordiality, in the consciousness and search of which the best instincts of a composite people converge.

The link between the man and the work is straightway recognisable. The writer's whole life is full of a carelessness which exposes itself too much to the rigours of chance not to feel them, and which arms itself with resignation and humour against a contrary fate. Such indeed is the philosophy of the destiny which is here depicted to us. The incidents that cross it are borrowed more than once from the biography of Goldsmith; the peregrinations of his youth furnish a long episode. Through certain of its elements, *The Vicar of Wakefield* is still related to the picaresque type; but the plot, though loose at some moments, concentrates and unifies itself in a true action. It is handled by one who has a keen sense of situations, and here the playwright is recognisable; the first part abounds in pretty comedy scenes, while the second is more dramatic in colouring. The surroundings described are those with which the childhood of Goldsmith had made him familiar. He has put into his book his individual tastes, his political and social ideas. The tone of a charitable simplicity, attentive to the claims of the humble, which is also that of his own sensibility, is breathed from these pages in a manifold suggestion. This humanitarian note becomes even more precise in philanthropic theses against duelling, against the severity of the penal code, on behalf of the reform of prison life. There is already, potentially, the declared preference of a Dickens for the lower ranks, and the satire which Thackeray will level at the snob.

The ethics preached are not the austere Puritanism of Richardson. Goldsmith addresses his lessons just as much to the heart as to the will power of the mind. As with Dickens at a later date, everything resolves itself into the teaching of good-

ness. Sentiment raised to the status of a doctrine and a rule finds the centre from which it will henceforth radiate over English life: *The Vicar of Wakefield* is the novel of the family and of the home.

So wide, so constant, so universal is the hold of these themes over the emotions, that the book owes to them an unequalled popularity. It is the first masterpiece of domestic literature, which Steele had but hardly sketched. The reaction of simplicity against the artificial life and empty refinement of a frivolous or corrupt society here assumes its full character; without going as far in the field of doctrine as did Rousseau—whose ideas he recalls, and whose influence he slightly felt—Goldsmith teaches us, in fact, a kind of philosophy of Nature. If he has no impassioned descriptions of landscape, he situates his novel in a setting of rustic freshness, and delights in calling forth the sweet pictures of country peace.

Thus one can perceive in Goldsmith the broad deep current that is leading to Romanticism. He has many of the inner feelings of which the new literature will be made up; he has even the retrospective trend of sensibility and imagination. Not only does he extol the moral purity of simple folks, but he finds pleasure in describing the archaic traits of peasant customs, exalts the touching beauty of the old popular ballads, which Percy had just brought back into vogue. He can intuitively discern what is dying and withering in the poetry of his time, and calls for a rejuvenation of form through the suppression of the well-worn epithet. His inspiration remains classical in its sly finesse, its sense of measure, its self-possession, its balance and its humour; his language, of a true and charming spontaneousness, is however in the bondage of the verbal habits of the century; it tends to the generality of expression, and is not devoid of a certain solemnity, redeemed for the pleasure of the reader by its artistic harmony with the professional seriousness of the hero.

Thus the book is connected in rather a complicated way with the realism that permeates the surrounding atmosphere. The working out of the materials borrowed from reality shows skill; the observation is sharp, and the satire often bold; the characters are painted with an exquisitely shaded, but at times cruel sense of truth, beneath the indulgence which envelops them; the vicar's wife is a personage of caustic comedy; a figure such as that of

Thornhill, the seducer, is much closer to nature and life than that of Mr. B. of *Pamela,* and the sinner, in Goldsmith, shows himself to be more hardened. . . . But this clear-sightedness, devoid of illusion, is attenuated by the pleasing grace of an idyll; fanciful preconceptions, intentional improbabilities, a tender serenity, bathe us in an atmosphere that is far removed from that in which critical realism usually has its being.

The Vicar of Wakefield opens up a fecund vein, and one which many future novelists will exploit: the middle-class dramas of poverty and pride, the conflict of pure values and of social materialism. From this point of view, its lineage will be very numerous. It is for other reasons, however, that it has remained at the heart itself of English literature. It creates, not for the first time, but in its most average and representative form, a type in which certain of the deepest preferences of the British people will henceforth recognise themselves. The series of psychological traits, forming an organic whole, to the description of which tend not only the portrait of the vicar, but those of his circle, and the general teaching of the story, make up an attitude which one might define as a feeble utilitarian attention, an incomplete critical intelligence, a sincere moral scruple, a generous cordiality; and also innocent faults, some vanity, whims which give a particular bent to the soul, without absorbing it in an egoistical preoccupation of self. In this type, national sentiment likes the normal, real traits—the absence of intellectuality, the concern for behaviour; it does not less approve of the elements which reality has not always to offer, and which answer to its own keen desire for idealisation and optimism, namely goodness and disinterestedness. Perhaps, also, this last inclination, contradicted as it is by the strong practical instinct of the race, is appreciated because the average individual likes to find it in others. . . .

However it may be, the vicar of Goldsmith is a moral figure of which English literature offers us many close or distant replicas. Before this date, his first lineaments appear in the work of the humorists of the Renascence and of the seventeenth century; Steele and Addison sketch his picture in Sir Roger de Coverley; Fielding develops it in Parson Adams; Sterne fills it out, in his "Uncle Toby," with incomparable precision of characteristics, but deflects it in a rather special direction. After Goldsmith, it reappears in the pages of Jane Austen, Walter Scott, Dickens,

Thackeray. . . . In the fusing of naïve simplicity with natural goodness, the English instinct feels an invincible idealism of temperament, which excludes the highest aims of the mind, but also all the meanness and dryness of the heart. By its tenacious resistance to the irony and blows of Fate, by its power of resilience, wholesome illusion and self-forgetfulness, as by its faculty of moral originality and oddness, by its outlook curiously warped in some directions, by all that an obstinate whim can imply of heroism, this type represents a kind of obscure chivalric generosity, and one has been able to see in it the English and popular counterpart of Don Quixote.

4. *Sterne.*—The work of Sterne[1] is all made up of his personality. With him, the sentimental novel reaches the extreme limit of its principle. The barriers which with Richardson had opposed the display of self—Puritan repression, the desire to instruct, the craving for dramatic effects—here collapse of themselves; leaving only the unlimited exercise of a sensibility which expresses itself, and which carries along with it all the most individual elements of the inner being.

This absolute victory of sentiment is not without an influence upon its intimate quality. In becoming the guiding principle of inspiration, it enters into a full consciousness of its liberty and force; its close association with art must needs introduce into it some artifice. The sentimentalism of Sterne handles the means at its command with a virtuosity that supposes an inner division of the self, a complete mastery of the emotion by the devices employed. His humour, enriched by the supple play of a delectable and lucid originality, implies a detachment, a self-possession in both cases unlimited. Thus an intellectuality, and with it a coldness, creep into the very heart of a literature which represents itself as animated by a communicative ardour. The

[1] Laurence Sterne, born in 1713, great-grandson of an Anglican bishop, studied at Cambridge, took orders, and after having filled several posts, received an ecclesiastical living at York. He had only written some trifles when there appeared his first volumes of a novel, *Tristram Shandy* (1760, etc.; completed in 1767), which had an immediate success. Delicate in health, he made long stays in France and Italy (1762-4), published a second novel, *A Sentimental Journey*, and died the same year (1768). His *Letters* and *Sermons* form a considerable part of his work. *Works*, ed. by Saintsbury, 1894; ed. by Cross, 1904. *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*, edn. Temple Classics. See Traill, *Sterne* (English Men of Letters), 1882; P. Stapfer, *Laurence Sterne*, 1870; Cross, *Life and Times of Sterne*, 1909, new edit. 1925; Sichel, *Sterne*, 1910; Melville, *Life and Letters of Sterne*, 1911; A. de Froe, *L. Sterne and His Novels, Studied in the Light of Modern Psychology*, 1925.

inability to move feeling, just as to feel, will therefore be the danger that menaces this literature; and long before the advent of Romanticism, indeed as early as the next generation, it will reveal itself as undermined by the special rhetoric and morbid refinement of emotion.

With Sterne himself, this decay is not without making itself already visible. The perfect detachment of the artist, at least, assures him a sovereign ease of manner; and the novel thus becomes, at a very early stage, a form of art that is completely autonomous, capable of receiving all the thought, all the fancy—all the person of a writer, and in a word all the intellectual life of an epoch. Such an elasticity singles it out from now onwards to be what it will become very soon: the best instrument of expression among all others, and the dominant branch of literature in the modern age.

Psychological duality is the characteristic feature of an attitude, such as that of Sterne; and consciousness or artifice does not exclude with him the sincerity of emotion. His sentiment was really part of his life; and a sufficient part, indeed, for him to know by experience its weakness and instability. His moral figure, one of the most curious in the century, is explained as much by his correspondence as by his work. Here one sees him in his youth sending to his fiancée letters that overflow with an exalted, frenzied sensibility, with which the dry indifference of the conjugal epistles of some years later stands out in the most striking contrast. It seems that *Tristram Shandy,* by the singular mixture of its pathos and irony, expresses at once the lesson of this experience, and the obstinacy of a temperament for which the pleasure of sentimentalising was a vital need. In fact, the mature years of Sterne were still to have their passionate moments, and the *Letters to Eliza* are full of the most romantic fire. The *Sentimental Journey* refines the cult of emotion, and puts the finishing touch on its highly elaborate, artificial character, but in no way does it abjure this cult.

However strange his vocation may appear, when one thinks of the freedom of his writings, Sterne was a member of the clergy. The many sermons he has left behind still deserve to be read, for the additional help they give us if only to understand his mind. A similar depth of inward reflection is here revealed, by simpler and more direct means than in the novels.

Strictly speaking, there is little morality to be found in them; the radiance of an idealistic conviction is absent. But the intuitive and concrete knowledge of the laws of human nature, the basing of the rules of conduct upon the deep reality of instincts, serve as a support to a practical wisdom, with which the lessons of the Gospel are reconciled without too great difficulty. The analysis of the secret movements of the heart shows a remarkable finesse; and the clear-sightedness of the moralist is without illusion. An expert writer here exercises himself in the handling of rhetoric; the effects of emotion are prepared and developed with self-complacent skill; the style already has often the ample resources which it owes to a personal syntax; while the precision, the sureness of the general arrangement, confirm all that one feels of the spirit of conscious determination behind the absolute disorder of *Tristram Shandy*.

A constant, exacting and ingenious pursuit of originality, such is the effort which sums up the intention of Sterne; the other ends he seeks—to amuse, to move the feelings, to instruct—are subordinated to this essential freak which he raises to the dignity of a principle. To extract everything from one's own substance; to stimulate and unceasingly refresh the attention of the reader; to cast nothing in the ready-made moulds of thought or expression—this is what he wants and what he claims to do. What is, no doubt, the capital scruple of a conscientious art—the fear of the mental automatisms to which laziness or fatigue will succumb—here becomes an exasperated and diseased worry; and this very exasperation gives rise to an unexpected mechanism. The literary figure of Sterne is that of a central inspiration marvellously supple and free, irradiating into diverse but connected forms, in which habit, devices, and almost mania everywhere manifest themselves.

Thus the variety of effects is very far from being infinite, and Sterne is constantly imitating himself. At least he never imitates anybody else, if one examines the substance of his work. No writer ever was more original, by the inner quality of his personality. Yet nothing is easier than to recognise in Sterne the traces of innumerable active suggestions. His genius is assimilative. With a sure divination, he has gone to the sources whence he could draw his inspiration without fear, because it was his own

nature that he found there. *Don Quixote* is a pleasant and symbolic tale in which we have an illustration of the contrasting glory and misery of mankind; now it is from the sharp perception, the ironical teaching of this contrast that the philosophy of Sterne is at bottom made up; and so his main novel is full of Cervantes. The half-conscious strangeness, the "quaintness" of Burton, now become more lucidly conscious, permeates every page of his work. His moments of good-nature recall Montaigne. He has succeeded in incorporating all the exaggeration, the jocularity of Rabelais into his more extensive range of effects. He borrows on every side, pillaging his predecessors, for the most part without quoting their names. But what he owes them, he has compounded with what he owes to no one, and this is all that matters.

Tristram Shandy recounts the "life and opinions" of the hero —an indefinite theme, worked out by a verve that has not the slightest concern for order, unity or logic. The story is spun out of a long digression in which a hundred topics are all mixed and interwoven together. It is only in the third book that Tristram is born; his life remains obscure; begun late, it does not finish, and to tell the truth is only a pretext; round it are grouped figures of more prominent relief, and the drollest of inventions, impertinent, paradoxical, and mystifying, pours itself out unceasingly into narrations, sallies, endless conversations and reflections. The most material means add to this bewildering confusion: glancings off of the style, marked by the constant use of the introductory hyphen, incomplete sentences, enigmatical paragraphs, diagrams, white or black pages, etc. The work is a series of mental and verbal pirouettings.

This fancifulness is the humorous vestment—the most variegated imaginable—of a mind which finds a supreme satisfaction, and the full display of its essentially ironic power, in never expressing itself simply. Through the network of these manifold transpositions, from the release of which the comic element springs, is visible the play of the indirect suggestions which give the humour its serious taste and deep value. There is nothing new in the elements of Sterne's philosophy; but it associates in a novel way the subtle cruel analysis of all the mediocre, ugly background covered up by the conventional dignity of social life, with the effusion of an indulgent humanity that accepts, excuses

or loves. The feeling of relativity is the very soul of humour; it here develops the whole series of its ironic and sceptical consequences; it is accompanied, on the other hand, by a mixed emotion in which the note of bitter pessimism can be perceived, but where the dominant tone is that of compassionate tolerance.

The ring of this humour is the very resonance of the personality of Sterne; and it is no wonder that the characters he has managed to draw should all suggest the same note with varying shades of difference; for he does not possess the art of creation in the highest degree; the figures of his book are visibly connected with him. The Shandy family is composed of original types; its members, and those who come into contact with them, are seen to be related among themselves and with the author. They all possess an oddity allied to a naturalness, and are gifted with an inner vitality that overcomes the resistance of judgment, and imposes the feeling of reality through the saving grace of our sympathy; but their outlines are keyed up to an extremely intense pitch; indeed, they escape being caricatures only by the geniality with which they are instinct. Dickens will remember these types.

Among the aspects of this philosophy and the devices of this humour, there are some which by their constant reappearance come to acquire an obsessing relief: those which touch upon the animality in human nature. The physiological reactions subjacent to the sentiments and acts of which polite society refuses to recognize anything save the spiritual side, the reverse of the emotions, the passions, and of life itself, haunt Sterne to such an extent as to clothe the whole of his work in a strange colouring of refined brutality and intellectual cynicism. This moral attitude is of a piece with that which in the *Sentimental Journey* concerns itself so minutely with the most imperceptible bestirrings of the senses. There is nothing here that resembles the great broad laugh of Rabelais; it is like a relish for ambiguity indulged in for its own sake; it is a sly irreverence which, without ever saying anything, insinuates everything. One is tempted to see in it a craving for truth, a stubborn frankness of spirit which covers itself up, or pretends to do so, behind the superficial reticence and prudery of the world, and gains in addition a comic value from this transparent mask. The vision of the contrast, as a rule hypocritically hidden, between the moral being and the brute

in man, would therefore be at the root of all this order of pleasantry; a vision at bottom bitter, tragic, and closely allied to Christian pessimism. But beside this moral concern, it is impossible not to see in it all a certain obsessing mania, some indelicacy, and some perversity pure and simple.

With time the art of Sterne developed towards a perfect sureness of touch. The *Sentimental Journey* is of a much more concentrated and sober form, of a purer line, than *Tristram Shandy;* and it cannot be said that the matter has become poorer, for the impressions and the episodes of this sojourn in France allow a reflection that is always alert to indulge in a constant meditation upon life. The manners and character of the French occupy the foreground; and Sterne, certainly, has not seen all, or understood all he saw; his liberty of judgment is only relative; but it is remarkable, and his psychological interpretation is often of a penetrating accuracy. A series of small vignettes, finished with exquisite care, all full of subtle intentions, whence emanates a somewhat morbid, and yet ironical sentiment; where is displayed the quivering sense of the finest shades, together with a kind of persistent coarseness of attention—this is the work of a master writer, who has not yet been surpassed either in the finished polish of the detail, or in the handling of suggestion, though the labour itself and the concentration detract from the spontaneity of the whole.

With their episodes of travel bathed in complacent emotion, their essential subjectivism, their language fully charged with implicitness—are not such pages as these already romantic? They are still very far from being so. Sterne's sentimentalism, which commands itself, is a new resource exploited by a severe and intellectual art; imagination here, while constantly put to contribution, is a servant and not a master; the outer world only furnishes elements that have been carefully chosen, and what is felt is immediately fashioned into thought. However free the style may be, it has not in any way thrown off the discipline of classicism; almost everything is merely understood, but the words are not instinct with an expressive force that in itself is indefinite and vague; they are not pregnant with music.

The sentimental novel, with Sterne, escapes from the control of the particular needs of the middle-class spirit; it proclaims that

sentiment, which has become a source of enjoyment, and an end in itself, will henceforth be liberated from ethics. It thus constitutes a stage on the road now opened up, and leading to Romanticism.

To be consulted: *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. x. chaps. i., iii., ix.; Cross, *Development of the English Novel*, 1899; idem, *Life and Times of Sterne*, 1925; Dobson, *Life of Goldsmith*, 1888; idem, *Richardson* (English Men of Lettres), 1902; Schmidt, *Richardson, Rousseau und Goethe*, 1875; Sichel, *Sterne*, etc., 1910; Texte, *J.-J. Rousseau et les origines du cosmopolitisme littéraire*, 1895; Thayer, *L. Sterne in Germany*, 1905; C. Thomson, *Richardson*, 1900.

CHAPTER IV

REALISM

1. *Realism and the Modern English Mind.*—By the side of the novel of sentiment, the realistic novel develops. The two forms are not separated by any real opposition. They have some common traits, and are varieties of one and the same species.

Realism was already in existence; it had been the first to appear; De Foe had given it a very definite expression. The middle-class spirit and the classical mind were both favourable to it; and such instinctive bents of attention as might seem to contradict it, in this age as in the future, are seen to admit of it freely enough. Something which is the English mind itself, this general temperament in which the diverse tendencies of the extreme types are fused together, shows that henceforth it is bound up with it by a sure and constant affinity. The access of the middle classes to social influence had allowed this psychological mean, this average temper, to work itself out. The outstanding representative value of Fielding lies in the fact that he is widely and completely in harmony with it.

Fielding's first novel, *Joseph Andrews,* is the outcome of a conscious reaction against the first novel of Richardson, *Pamela.* But realism does not result from a reaction against sentimentalism; it continues to exist, only stimulated to a new and more aggressive affirmation of itself by the excess of an art in which the exigencies of Puritanism introduced a narrow and morbid view of human nature. Fielding, in fact, scoffed at Richardson, but knew also how to do him justice; he did not want to stand over against him as an antithesis, but rather to improve upon him; he has certain essential instincts in common with him; and the course of his life, together with his work, drew the two writers together.

As compared with Richardson, he represents not only a complementary type of mind, but a more normal and sound one. His desire is to give sentiment its right place; but also to integrate

it in an organic series of tendencies, where each contributes to maintain a mutual balance. Beside what is an extreme type, he stands not for the other extreme, but for the synthesis, the practical and the most stable form. His realism unites the most common desires of the new society in England: the taste for the concrete, the need to see it without illusion in order not to feel any surprise or disappointment when acting upon it and co-operating with it; the resolution not to sacrifice the several elements of the human being one to another, and to know at times how to feel a soft emotion, when it is useful that the soul should be softened. And this is why Fielding has been recognised by England as one of the most profoundly national of its writers.

His realism is of a moderate quality, and does not go to the excess of a bitter preference for the cruel truths which convention neglects. His pursuit of reality never was prompted by rancour or hatred. On this point, Smollett, his contemporary, differs from him. Temperamental motives, personal impulses, lead away the author of *Roderick Random* from this middle line, and bring him to an intentional harshness, a crudeness of description, in which a set purpose is revealed, and which call to mind the pessimistic realism of the nineteenth century.

2. *Fielding.*—Fielding's[1] desire is to depict things as he sees them; and his vision is not that of Richardson. The lights and shades over the prospect of the moral world are not distributed in the same way for him. His personal experience is somewhat mixed; he allows us to gather the fact from his work the more

[1] Henry Fielding, born in Somersetshire in 1707, of an aristocratic family, studied at Eton and in Leyden; wrote for the stage from 1728 to 1737 (see below, chap. vi.), pursued his law studies, collaborated in a periodical, *The Champion* (1739-41), and published in 1742 a parody of *Pamela: The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews, and of His Friend Mr. Abraham Adams.* Then appeared three volumes of *Miscellanies*, containing poems, a phantasy, *A Journey from This World to the Next*, and a satirical novel, *The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*, 1743. He wrote against the Pretender (*The True Patriot*, 1745); was appointed a judge in London, and acquitted himself of his duties with much zeal; found time to write two novels, *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, 1749, and *Amelia*, 1751. Then in 1752 he edited a periodical, *The Covent Garden Journal*, but his health gave way; he set out for Lisbon, and died there in 1754, leaving behind an account of his voyage, which was published in 1755. *Works*, ed. by Saintsbury, 1893; ed. by Gosse, 1899; the novels have been published in Everyman's Library, etc.; *Novels*, Oxford edit., 1926. *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, ed. by Dobson, World's Classics; *Covent Garden Journal*, ed. by Jensen, 1916. See Dobson, *Fielding* (English Men of Letters), 1907; Godden, *H. Fielding*, 1910; Cross, *The History of Henry Fielding*, 1919; Digeon, *Les Romans de Fielding*, 1923; idem, *Le Texte des Romans de Fielding*, 1923; F. T. Blanchard, *Fielding the Novelist, a Study in Historical Criticism*, 1926.

readily, as a certain easy indulgence in manners is not foreign to the notion he entertains of a character that has been formed by life. The drama that Richardson has woven round a feminine virtue, too skilful not to be calculating, seems to Fielding more immodest than edifying; to generalise this attitude and this spirit, is to turn conduct into an affair of slyly interested prudence. In the principles thus proclaimed, there is a too strained and somewhat chimerical austerity; while in the reality of the inner self are hidden movements of the natural being, which repression only aggravates instead of attenuating. Such is the serious element underlying the parody which lends to Joseph, Pamela's brother, all the merits of his sister, and ridicules a line of conduct by extending it. The theme was easy, and *Joseph Andrews* might well have remained a novel of very limited scope, had it not quickly lost sight of its starting point.

Without caring for abstract thought in itself, Fielding is a philosopher; he believes in principles; and his work is the clear and abundant illustration of his ethics. *Tom Jones* is a long didactic treatise on the diverse quality of souls, and their different reaction to experience. Some people are born good, others bad, but in most cases each has a mixture of good and evil. It is not difficult to separate the examples to be followed from those which must be rejected, or to recognise in oneself which instincts to cultivate and which to destroy. A spontaneous generosity of heart, a simple frankness, a sincere sense of goodness, are the precious germs of all real virtues. Whatever they develop, the exuberance of a rich nature will be able at times to cover them up, to conceal them; but the only true morality is the fruit of their growth, however obstructed this may be. As for all the rest—sophistic doctrines, rules of conduct based on pure reason or on the metaphysical fitness of things, Puritan austerity, the deceitful effort of a soured conscience to vest itself in innocent sweetness—it is only lies. Immense is the task of the moralising novelist, as the social domain of false pretension. This he shall paint, and from his very painting laughter will rise, for the unique source of the ridiculous is affectation, and this is made up of vanity or hypocrisy.

There is thus a set purpose in the writings of Fielding; like 4
Richardson, his desire is to instruct; but in place of a sentimentality which to him is hollow, his tales will inspire a virile sound-

ness of character. An art so full of its high calling takes care to justify its method. Fielding is steeped to the very marrow with classical culture. His keenest concern is to found his practice upon the examples of the Ancients. The novel of manners is not as yet aware of its own tradition, which is only just incipient. Bunyan, De Foe, Addison and Steele are precedents that are too scattered, and in too many respects different, to offer the mind a picture of continued progress. Richardson's *Pamela* is cast in a particular mould, and its feverish pathos makes it something far other than a model for Fielding. He believes therefore that in writing *Joseph Andrews,* he can derive encouragement only from the literatures of the Ancients. Here again, it is through parody that classicism seeks to reconcile the vitality of thought and the loyalty to a principle of imitation. While the new work is intended to rouse laughter, it will not be a comedy, since it will have a wide grasp of all the aspects of reality, of which pure comedy takes in but one side. By the breadth of its scope it will recall the epic, while by its tonality it will recall the burlesque. It will therefore be a "comic epic in prose." It is under this rather strange definition that the first work is presented in which the modern novel has the full liberty of its form.

Tom Jones bristles with theories. At the beginning of each part or almost, a general chapter of doctrine is prominently placed. The author there disserts with an abundance that would be pedantic, if it were not enlivened by humour and an engaging frankness. He thus takes the trouble to show us that this "history of a life" enjoys the privilege of choosing between facts, and of eliminating what is useless; that the discussions of ideas introduce a pleasing variety into the whole. And in order not to fall short of the epic definition he upholds, Fielding strews his narrative with laboriously developed mock-heroic comparisons.

All these trappings weigh heavily upon the work, and would crush it completely if it did not possess so strong a vigour. Underneath them, and often against them, the temperament of Fielding keeps following its own law. The novel as he conceives it is a large grouping together of parallel actions, which are set around a few main individual destinies at stake, and in their collectivity, and in the varied lesson that emanates from each, give an exact and instructive image of life. The field it embraces

is therefore vast, the personages are very numerous; the plot is shifted freely through time and space, under the reserve of probability, and within the limits of the hero's existence; the most diverse social surroundings are studied or touched upon in passing. In a word, the manifold elements composing the story must be subservient to a philosophical unity, built up out of the experience itself of a human existence, out of the judgment of a gradually matured mind on the theatre in which it is at once a spectator and an actor. No form of art is more suited to the tastes and needs of the modern public; above all, perhaps, of the English public. This formula, which serves realism and ethics at one and the same time, will henceforth remain, with slight or serious qualifications and changes, the law of this literary kind, or of its most important variety.

The novel of Fielding is too natural an outcome of the moral instincts of the society of the day, and of the work of literary preparation that had already been accomplished, to require any explaining by way of distant influences. Something of the impulse that produces *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* is derived from *Don Quixote,* that source of humour and irony without bitterness which the English genius has never ceased to put to contribution. French novels, the *Roman Comique* of Scarron, the *Roman Bourgeois* of Furetière, the *Marianne* and the *Payson Parvenu* of Marivaux, may have stimulated or guided this creative intuition, without our being able to estimate precisely their action. But the effect of the picaresque tradition is certainly to be felt in Fielding, as in his contemporary Smollett. The philosophical unity with which he wants to stamp his work is not so strong as the spirit of diversity and adventure. *Joseph Andrews* is very loosely put together. Of a much closer compactness, the framework of *Tom Jones* is not of a perfect texture; a long tale of adventitious interest is still grafted into the story.

The quality of the realism in these novels assures them a precious documentary value. Town manners, the pleasures and amusements of the capital, country society organised round the squire, and where the vicar occupies, for a time, a singularly less dignified place; stagecoaches, inns, and the incidents of the road, the underworld of vice and crime, have here left traces sufficiently accurate in themselves to be of use to the historian. As a magistrate, Fielding knows well the conflicts of the penal codes

and the instincts; he recounts them with the exactitude of a well-informed witness, and the zeal of a reformer. For he has a generous conception of justice; no doubt, his ideas on the right to punish, on the responsibility of the criminal, on the social régime, do not go beyond the range of vision of his time; but he quickens them through the susceptibility of a noble conscience; he has felt and shown the cruelty of certain legal punishments, the scandals of judicial administration. His calm, objective work is at times animated by a humane ardour, just as the independence of his thought does not stop at the inequalities which his age deemed necessary.

Fielding has that broad, tolerant nature, that faculty of moral observation, that curiosity of life for itself, which usually go to make the creators of character. He had written comedies; the play of personalities in contact with each other, striving the one against the other, interested and amused him; he has known how to come out of himself, how to endow imaginary creatures with real life. His novels have popularised types that retain their hold upon the English public. But the figures he has drawn are of very unequal value. A fairly large number bear the traces of a didactic intention or of a strong bias; despite the concrete traits given them by the humour of the writer, they have a certain air of artificiality or of theoretical invention: such are Allworthy, the man wise and master of himself, who is not at times without recalling Grandison; and Blifil, the stage hypocrite. The hero of *Tom Jones*, a fine fellow without malice, and Sophia his charming fiancée, have always appealed to British hearts; it is difficult for a foreign reader not to show them a rather cold esteem, and this not without some injustice, because their superficial banality hides a naturalness that is both solid and true. This banality is due to their very harmony with national preferences which have since been often asserted, and which, under more refined exigencies, are to-day still to be felt. But a Parson Adams, a Squire Western, are creations of admirable vigour, of lively and attractive colouring; the heroine of *Amelia* is truly touching; in these personages, the invention of Fielding has spent itself without following any other laws than that of adhering to the organic interrelations between the elements of character; and this by starting out from an intuitively known reality, which he found either in himself, or in those beings whose lives were interwoven

with his own, or in social types of intense relief, and very closely observed.

The wealth of his genius, so human in itself, and whose development was cut off by too premature a death, remains a subject of astonishment. His last novel reveals quite a change in his manner of writing; a matureness, a softening, a progress towards delicacy, which temper an inspiration at times a trifle crude without weakening it in any way. *Amelia* gives us a more inviting image of the world, in which feminine goodness redeems and corrects many an error; and one could be led to perceive in the intention behind this picture a more marked fondness of heart for that ideal of sentiment which Fielding had treated, in his early works, with ironical mistrust. He drew nearer to Richardson, just as Richardson never ceased to think of him. The realism of *Amelia* is homely and intimate, and announces Rousseau and Goldsmith. Relieved as it is of all epic pretension, and giving itself out more simply for what it is, strong in the profundity and solidity of the theme it treats—conjugal relations after the tastes of English middle-class society—with more life in its dialogues, more rapidity in its narrative, this novel would be Fielding's masterpiece, if it had not, on the other hand, its weak points in construction, and if *Tom Jones* did not retain the advantage of an incomparable robustness.

It is also a more sober, unadorned art, a lightness of touch which at times attains to grace, and the turn of an easy style, that assure their original place to less substantial writings, such as the *Journey from This World to the Next*, an unequal work, which at certain moments makes one think of Voltaire, as much as of Lucian. *Jonathan Wild* is on a superior level; not that the subject is new; the theme of the reversing of social situations and moral values had already often been dealt with; it is at the centre of that vein of parody which runs through the very core of the classical age. But the condensed irony, the self-mastery, the mental liberty heightened by the implicit violence of the thwarted passion, have here a power that recalls and equals Swift. The last work of Fielding—the account of his voyage to Lisbon—is of a different note; it has a taking charm where the melancholy of an approaching end commingles with the gaiety of a still sarcastic reflection, and with the generosity of a still elevated mind.

and the instincts; he recounts them with the exactitude of a well-informed witness, and the zeal of a reformer. For he has a generous conception of justice; no doubt, his ideas on the right to punish, on the responsibility of the criminal, on the social régime, do not go beyond the range of vision of his time; but he quickens them through the susceptibility of a noble conscience; he has felt and shown the cruelty of certain legal punishments, the scandals of judicial administration. His calm, objective work is at times animated by a humane ardour, just as the independence of his thought does not stop at the inequalities which his age deemed necessary.

Fielding has that broad, tolerant nature, that faculty of moral observation, that curiosity of life for itself, which usually go to make the creators of character. He had written comedies; the play of personalities in contact with each other, striving the one against the other, interested and amused him; he has known how to come out of himself, how to endow imaginary creatures with real life. His novels have popularised types that retain their hold upon the English public. But the figures he has drawn are of very unequal value. A fairly large number bear the traces of a didactic intention or of a strong bias; despite the concrete traits given them by the humour of the writer, they have a certain air of artificiality or of theoretical invention: such are Allworthy, the man wise and master of himself, who is not at times without recalling Grandison; and Blifil, the stage hypocrite. The hero of *Tom Jones,* a fine fellow without malice, and Sophia his charming fiancée, have always appealed to British hearts; it is difficult for a foreign reader not to show them a rather cold esteem, and this not without some injustice, because their superficial banality hides a naturalness that is both solid and true. This banality is due to their very harmony with national preferences which have since been often asserted, and which, under more refined exigencies, are to-day still to be felt. But a Parson Adams, a Squire Western, are creations of admirable vigour, of lively and attractive colouring; the heroine of *Amelia* is truly touching; in these personages, the invention of Fielding has spent itself without following any other laws than that of adhering to the organic interrelations between the elements of character; and this by starting out from an intuitively known reality, which he found either in himself, or in those beings whose lives were interwoven

with his own, or in social types of intense relief, and very closely observed.

The wealth of his genius, so human in itself, and whose development was cut off by too premature a death, remains a subject of astonishment. His last novel reveals quite a change in his manner of writing; a matureness, a softening, a progress towards delicacy, which temper an inspiration at times a trifle crude without weakening it in any way. *Amelia* gives us a more inviting image of the world, in which feminine goodness redeems and corrects many an error; and one could be led to perceive in the intention behind this picture a more marked fondness of heart for that ideal of sentiment which Fielding had treated, in his early works, with ironical mistrust. He drew nearer to Richardson, just as Richardson never ceased to think of him. The realism of *Amelia* is homely and intimate, and announces Rousseau and Goldsmith. Relieved as it is of all epic pretension, and giving itself out more simply for what it is, strong in the profundity and solidity of the theme it treats—conjugal relations after the tastes of English middle-class society—with more life in its dialogues, more rapidity in its narrative, this novel would be Fielding's masterpiece, if it had not, on the other hand, its weak points in construction, and if *Tom Jones* did not retain the advantage of an incomparable robustness.

It is also a more sober, unadorned art, a lightness of touch which at times attains to grace, and the turn of an easy style, that assure their original place to less substantial writings, such as the *Journey from This World to the Next,* an unequal work, which at certain moments makes one think of Voltaire, as much as of Lucian. *Jonathan Wild* is on a superior level; not that the subject is new: the theme of the reversing of social situations and moral values had already often been dealt with; it is at the centre of that vein of parody which runs through the very core of the classical age. But the condensed irony, the self-mastery, the mental liberty heightened by the implicit violence of the thwarted passion, have here a power that recalls and equals Swift. The last work of Fielding—the account of his voyage to Lisbon—is of a different note; it has a taking charm where the melancholy of an approaching end commingles with the gaiety of a still sarcastic reflection, and with the generosity of a still elevated mind.

more careful art than *Roderick Random*, its composition is just as loose; and the ferocity of Smollett's first novel has a concentrated ardour, and its verve possesses a savour, which give to the book a superior intensity of character. This remains his most solid literary claim.

Smollett does not offer us so large a picture of society in its entirety as Fielding. More errant still, the careers of his heroes leads us through spectacles of greater diversity; he unfolds to our gaze many vistas of the picturesque aspects of life, but the link that unites them is superficial; the strong social organisation of Fielding's works has no equivalent here. It is in his precise study of particular circles that Smollett triumphs. He has skilfully made use of his technical knowledge of certain professions, medicine for example, or of original types such as sailors. His sea dogs have a rich jovial picturesqueness, and their language has a saltish flavour; the pen that etches them in just sufficiently oversteps reality to merge slightly into caricature, without however wounding that instinct of truth which common sense sets against false creations. Commodore Trunnion and Lieutenant Bowling had only had mere character sketches as predecessors in English literature, but they have had numberless successors; they retain the ever fresh quality of the figures that synthetise in a striking manner a special province of life's variety.

Other episodical personages stand out in relief, a relief that is often the more striking, as their being is summed up for us in one brief vision, so that nothing is allowed to blur the exterior outline by which they are defined. But the heroes themselves of these novels of adventure are disappointing, for there is nothing here to replace the absent psychological study. The conception of Fathom—a type of villain—might have been interesting; it proceeds from a praiseworthy desire for renovation. But Smollett himself scarcely takes him seriously, and destroys any illusion on the part of the reader by expressing the regret of having ever imagined so black a soul! As for Random and Pickle, who are described to us as sympathetic, it is difficult to find them so. It would perhaps be unjust to reproach them with their mediocrity, for the picaresque class of writing demands average characters, and one has readily been grateful to a more modern naturalism for having had the courage to admit that the average individual is mediocre. But this courage supposes a

conscious will to art and philosophy, which it does not seem possible to attribute to Smollett. However indignant he may be against human nature in the abstract, he has shown a weakness for it as exemplified in his heroes; and the disagreeable truth appears to be that their moral insensibility, their indelicacy, and even at times their wickedness, were not intended by him as the consequence of a systematic purpose, but are the effect of a certain lack of perception. The faults which he wanted to give them are not by any means the gravest that we actually find in them.

The last novel of Smollett occupies a place apart in his work. *Humphry Clinker* unites the influences which a versatile talent had undergone, while following an autonomous development: that of Fielding, who taught him how better to construct an action and a character; that of Sterne, who had shown what a wealth of humour lay in the introversion and dividing, so to say, of self; and one must also add that of Richardson, for *Humphry Clinker* is written in the epistolary form. Above all, the book bears the trace of the inner progress of a soured personality towards peace, of a negative mind towards a more discriminating sense of things. The idea of the essential relativity of human opinions, which in itself is a source of tolerance, took possession of Smollett to such a degree that he organised his action round it: the same facts turn up again under the pen of different correspondents, and are explained each time in a different way. Richardson had had recourse to this device; but the consecutive use to which it is here put is of a very strong philosophical interest. An attention that is turned towards the angle of vision particular to each personage would of course tend towards the intimate analysis of each, and so the psychology of the novel is more carefully studied.

There are still, certainly, episodes of a very uncouth verve; the plot is again weak, while the comic inventiveness which spends itself in creating the maid Jenkins or Lieutenant Lismahago is not of the highest order. The work has qualities that are unexpected, and please the more; at the same time, it is not without showing in a way Smollett's old defects. On the other hand, it reveals more clearly the background of human kindness which had been hidden by the aggressive pessimism of the first works, and which was only perceptible at rare moments. Not only does Smollett, like Fielding, allow himself to be won over by a con-

tagious sentiment, but just as the other he shows a true compassion for the victims of society. Matthew Bramble, in whom the author has put much of himself, is a kind of surly humanitarian. Here realism culminates in philanthropy—an alliance that is to be fruitful. Taken up again and carried further at a later date, it will serve the lasting success of realism in England.

To be consulted: A. Blum, *Hogarth*, 1923; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. x. chap. ii.; Cross, *Development of the English Novel*, 1899; Idem, *The History of Henry Fielding*, 1919; Digeon, *Les Romans de Fielding*, 1923; Dobson, *Fielding* (English Men of Letters), 1907; Péronne, *Englische Zustände ins xviii Jahrhundert nach den Romanen von Fielding und Smollett*, 1890; Raleigh, *The English Novel*, 1894; Thackeray, *English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century*, 1853; Wershoven, *Smollett et Lesage*, 1883.

CHAPTER V

POLITICAL LITERATURE

1. *Political Unrest after 1750.*—The classical age coincided with a relatively stable order in society. Upon close examination, no doubt, the epoch of Queen Anne and of the first two Hanoverian rulers is anything but quiet; a war of intrigues, cabals, individual rivalry and party struggles, pursues its course almost without a break. But this unrest is inseparable from the régime which the English nation had chosen for itself, and in which we find strong oligarchical tendencies combining with the surviving forces of personal power, according to a variable formula, in a general framework of the parliamentary type. The elements of disturbance represented by the hidden menace of the Jacobites, by the open practice of corruption and by the violence of Walpole's enemies, do not destroy the character of a period in which a regular movement, without any serious jolt, develops and establishes the results of the Revolution of 1688. The new middle-class influences become more and more fused with the still intact authority of the aristocracy; and the course of things will continue in this way until the moment when, towards the end of the century, the slow upheaval caused by the great industrial growth will make itself felt.

But this atmosphere of calm, which is only relative, leaves room for a surging unrest of a rather serious nature when, shortly after the middle of the century, the accession of George III. brings with it the end of the Whig régime. The House of Hanover tries to regain a little of the prestige it has lost; it enters into conflict with a system of government which tends to exclude it; the rights of the monarch, those of the subjects, ministerial privileges, the attributes of Parliament, have all to be determined by a series of laborious adaptations; outside the country the secular duel between England and France attains one of its decisive moments; naval supremacy is at stake; and lastly, the thorny problem of the opposition between the interests of

Great Britain and the susceptible independence of her colonies now reveals itself. Public life traverses a phase of unrest as varied as it is profound, which is reflected in the thought of the time either by a pessimism, or by the active desire for national reform and regeneration.

In this atmosphere, political conviction and passion are among the most fecund stimulants of literary creation. Motives for strife had never been lacking, and in the preceding generation Swift had turned such themes to incomparable use. For a brief space, they again become one of the dominant forces of inspiration.

This literature is still classical in form, and scarcely departs in spirit from classicism. But it owes to the vivacity and spontaneity of the sentiments which give birth to it something that is more sincere and more direct. Prose is enlivened by a vehemence which fertilises the rhetoric of language; a form of poetry which was dying—satire in verse—is again animated by a living object. The slow and gradual evolution towards Romanticism owes a stage of its progress to the "patriotism" of Junius, Churchill and Chatham, as to all the reawakening sources of genuine sentiment.

2. *Wilkes, Junius.*—The years which precede and follow the accession of George III. (1760) witness an increase in the swarming numbers of pamphleteers and political journalists. Men of letters are enlisted to defend the prerogatives of the sovereign: Smollett is put in charge of the *Briton*; others set up for the "country's" advocates against the court; in the *North Briton*, Wilkes[1] supports the case of the opposition.

The figure of Wilkes is of very great historical interest. His literary work would not in itself have sufficed to raise him above his rivals. He owes his place in the national memory of the English people to the independence, prone to be aggressive, of a conduct and a language, the sincerity of which is at times and to some people a little questionable. The scandals of his life, and the boldness of his opinions, called forth against him from many of his contemporaries a reprobation that was not dispelled after

[1] John Wilkes, born in London in 1727, the son of a brewer, after a youth of dissipation, entered Parliament, launched the *North Briton* (1762-3), was prosecuted for his attacks against the person of the king (No.45), and formed the centre of one of the most important episodes in the political strife then ensuing. Suspended three times from Parliament, he finally resumed his seat as a victor, and died in 1797, at peace with the powers in authority. *Correspondence*, 1805. See P. Fitzgerald, *Life and Times of W.*, 1888; Treloar, *W. and the City*, 1917.

his death. This agitator, however, with his powerful fertility of verve, represented for a brief time the cause of a constitutional liberty to which the British instinct is sitll attached. His gifts are second-rate. He is talented as a polemist, knows how to handle irony and insult, how to appeal to the susceptibilities of his public; but his facility has no depth, nor his style any personality.

The value of the famous letters of "Junius"[1] is of quite another order.

The mystery which enshrouded them, and which has not yet been cleared up, counts for something in their unique prestige. If their effectiveness has not been quite what their author desired, they played, nevertheless, a part in the social development of the time; they constitute a document for the historian. But their most precious claim lies in themselves. They remain one of the highest achievements in polemical literature.

Efforts have been made to disparage the inspiration which animates them. It is certainly not irreproachable. Junius writes, not only on behalf of principles, and against facts or tendencies, but against men; he writes for others, and it has been possible to connect his work with the political interests of a definite group. The personal touch in the object of his attacks, and in the doctrine which prompts them, introduces therein some particular and arbitrary elements. His hostility is too stubborn not to be impassioned, and too impassioned to remain just; the movement of his eloquent logic represents too vigorous an impulse not to become, at a certain moment, an autonomous force, independent of reason or conscience. His indictments too often overshoot their mark; they leave all charitable feeling behind, and

[1] From January, 1769, until the end of 1771 there appeared in the *Public Advertiser* letters signed Junius (or often Philo-Junius, Lucius, Brutus, etc.), in which was felt all the irresistible force of personality of one and the same correspondent, already in evidence, during the course of the two preceding years, in irregular contributions to this or other papers. The action of Junius, which at times found itself in agreement with that of the friends of Wilkes, was nevertheless quite distinct; directed principally against the Duke of Grafton and the North ministry, it preserved an individuality of its own. A collection of the letters appeared in 1772; often reprinted, it grew in dimensions in 1812, 1850, etc. The identity of Junius is still obscure; after countless controversies and conjectures the prevailing opinion seems to attribute the letters to Sir Philip Francis (1740-1818), born in Ireland, an important official at the War Office from 1762 to 1772, then attached to the *Indian Administration*, the *sworn enemy of Warren Hastings*, and a member of Parliament. See H. R. Francis, *Junius Revealed*, 1894; Smith, *Junius Unveiled*, 1909, etc.

even truth itself. Those who to-day are still hurt by the arguments he propounds have no trouble in seeing and showing that he is a cruel and unscrupulous sophist. But if one examines his work leaving aside every prejudice, it quivers with a moral emotion which one cannot refuse to characterise as noble. The loftiness of the thought and language is not pompous affectation, but true elevation. The keen concern for the public welfare, an ardent patriotism, the religion of liberty are the ever-living soul of these accents. And the courage of a struggle which had its risks, despite an anonymity that was with difficulty kept up, just as this anonymity itself, preserved until the end and entailing the loss of any remunerative fame to the unknown author, all point to a self-effacement, a sincere sacrifice to duty.

Such an attitude is modelled upon the stoicism of antiquity, and in fact everything with Junius breathes the conscious imitation of the political idealism of the Romans. Classicism, which is now a withering force in literature, thus comes to be reinfused with vitality in the civic domain. Here one can perceive, through the disturbed but normal working of public life in England, something of that action of the themes and memories of ancient times upon the imaginations, which was to occupy so great a place in the French Revolution. On the other hand, while Junius claims as an example the republicanism of a Brutus, and exalts the sovereignty of the people to the point of reminding King George of the fate of Charles I., his doctrine is still distinctly British; he has feeling for national tradition, for the growth of institutions, for precedents; his work testifies to a mind trained in the school of law, and to a very full learning. The liberty he champions is constitutional; he calls for a union of citizens against the foreigner. His thought is an idealised expression of the average social instincts of the middle class.

The eloquence of Junius reveals a strong and cultured temperament, which has gleaned from the lessons of the classics the best they have to offer. He has the gift of vigour, neatness and sarcasm; his mind at will grasps a point of fact, a legal problem, and throws upon them a light that is visible immediately and to all; he discusses and orders arguments with sovereign ease; a scholarly sense of balance, an acquired rhetoric, both discipline and increase these natural qualities. He has the brilliant epigrammatic turn, the moral maxim, in the manner of Seneca, but

without monotony; he knows how to construct a Ciceronian period, but the tenor of his style is sober; the short sentence predominates. With the variety of tones which it can adopt—spirited, insistent, calm, ironical, violently offensive—this force is always master of itself, can hold itself in check, and govern itself with surprising success. Few English writers have been able to effect this difficult combination in language of vehement expression with a propriety of terms that would be absolute, were it not that the taste of the time, the mark of the century, manifest themselves in something more abstract and solemn than perfect simplicity would demand.

3. *Poetry: Churchill.*—Churchill[1] was a writer of free irregular habits, like Wilkes, whose friend he was; but he died young, and never experienced the sobering process of years. His short life, his moral independence, the intense character of his talent, lend him some of the external traits of Romanticism. At a time when men of letters take their place within the normal frame of society, he links up with the tradition of the semi-rebels, that was broken off after the Otways and the Lees.

His is a liberty of temperament and of instinct, with nothing in it that could emancipate the doctrine and conscious practice of poetry, or restore to sentimental inspiration all its rights. The work of Churchill does not effect, or attempt to effect, any deep renewal of the object and the methods of art. His first important poem, the *Rosciad,* where we have evidence of a virility already personal, is quite full of the influence of Pope in its epigrams, in its antithetical balancing, and sharp conciseness. Next, the need he experiences for variety, for sincerity, leads him in a backward direction, rather than towards the future. An affinity of nature makes him prefer Dryden to Pope. His heroic couplet, vigorous and of spontaneous flow, resembles in its ease and sonority that of *The Medal* and *Absalom.* When he seeks to escape from this mould of poetic expression, it is to the octosyl-

[1] Charles Churchill, born in 1731, the son of a clergyman, studied at Westminster School and Cambridge, took orders, but neglected his ecclesiastical duties

labic line of *Hudibras* that he reverts, but with rather mediocre success. He eloquently denounces all that savours of imitation, stereotyped writing and standard ideas.

This return to the former and true state of an inspiration now become artificial is like an obscure intuition, that voices a presentiment. In Churchill there is an innovator unknown to himself, a man whom his brief career, and the atmosphere of an age that is still unfavourable, will not allow to become aware of himself. He believes that he is tending towards the forcefulness of a spontaneous classicism, rediscovered beneath the fatigue of a declining art. This aspiration is already pregnant with a spirit which will be that of the new literature. From all his work there emanates an air of impatience and of scorn for rules which fetter poets as with paralysing bonds. He has the feeling for, experiences the urgent need of a new beauty created by the writer; he is the sworn enemy of the critics, as of order and authority. And like the Romanticists of a later date, he has within him a vein of moral insurrection, a daring spirit of outspokenness which revolts against "prudence," that mother of despicable and calculating virtues; a kind of half-serious individualism which culminates—another resemblance—in an apology of free living, of the "vie de bohème." . . .

This apostle of nature in art lacks what Wordsworth will possess: inspiration warm enough to melt the frigidness of the language, purify the simple words in the flame of emotion, and infuse them with movement and life. His frame of mind is still too intellectual, too cold, despite the violence of the style; it is also too superficial, too combative, too attentive to outward things, to personal or party strife. The satire of Churchill is never raised by the highest emotions. But it is not devoid of feeling; the sensibility therein revealed has its moments of youthfulness and touching naïvety; it remains sound, in spite of its braggart boldness.

In the very uneven quality of his work, there are portions of superior merit. No invective surpasses in furious energy of expression the *Epistle of Hogarth*. *The Prophecy of Famine* represents a more balanced art, with a picturesque and stirring verve. *Gotham*, an original poem, which strangely foreshadows Cowper, is full of a kind of virtual romanticism that uplifts and animates the rhythm of the rhymed couplet. The best passages

in Churchill have the stamp of a master touch, a happy fullness, a decisive aptness.

4. *Eloquence: Chatham.*—In these years of unrest, political eloquence attains an already brilliant stage of development with Chatham.[1]

The publication of any literal account of Parliamentary debates was forbidden by law. The first speeches of Chatham come to us in the form of summaries;[2] we can be sure of their general intent, but not of their words. The reporting of sittings is tolerated after 1771, and from that date we can base our judgment on more authentic texts.

It is about this time that the last and greatest period opens in the political life of Chatham, that in which he sees the prestige of the triumphs over which he had presided fade away in the disasters and errors of the struggle with America. A stirring ardour, a keen pathos animate his language; it is still saturated in classical memories, shows order, harmony, and neatness of turn; more ornate than that of Demosthenes, a contemporary says, it is less diffuse than that of Cicero. . . . His vehemence dominates and governs itself in absolute liberty. It displays a slightly conscious nobleness, a sometimes over-elaborate choice. But this rhetoric is instinct with a bitter passion, a painful patriotism; one feels in it the tremor of the wounded pride of an imperious soul, that can foresee the danger in store, without being able to force the means to avoid it upon men that are blind. The true ring of a lofty and domineering nature gives it a durable power.

Other orators come to the fore as Chatham declines. It is then that Burke appears; but his work belongs to the following period.

To be consulted: *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol x. chap. xvii; Fitzgerald, *Life and Times of J. Wilkes*, 1888, Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, 3rd edn., 1887; Williams, *Life of W. Pitt, Earl of Chatham*, 1913; T. Wright, *England Under the House of Hanover, etc., Illustrated from Caricatures and Satires*, 1868.

[1] William Pitt, born in 1708, came of gentry stock, studied at Oxford, entered Parliament in 1735 as member for the "rotten borough" of Old Sarum, and joined the Opposition against Walpole; Secretary of State in 1756, he directed affairs at the most brilliant moment in the war with France. Dismissed by George III., then recalled to power, and created Earl of Chatham (1766), he fell a victim to a nervous malady which forced him into retirement. He came forward, however, to denounce the political error committed with respect to the American colonies, and died after a final oratorical effort in 1778 *Speeches*, 1853. See Green, *Chatham*, 1901; Williams, *Life of Chatham*, 1913

[2] Samuel Johnson supplied them to the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

CHAPTER VI

THE THEATRE

1. *The Decline of the Theatre, and the Struggle of Tendencies.*—The classical age had seen the withering of the dramatic revival of the Restoration, which by its brilliance, and despite its weak points, did not make too discreditable a showing after the magnificent flowering of the theatre in Elizabethan times. Henceforth, this form of literature seems to lose its vitality. Its history during the course of the last threescore years or so of the eighteenth century is one of a long decadence, interrupted by some occasional break when the talent of an isolated author shines for a brief moment. So definite is the decline in this branch of literature that its effects increase with time, and towards the end of the century it reaches the lowest point in its downward trend.

A first explanation offers itself, in that at a time when the literary public is increasing in numbers, the taste for the theatre is spreading less. The most austere section of the middle classes, the conduct of which is regulated by Puritan, and next by Methodist views, still fosters an aversion on principle for the play.

This hostility cannot be decisive, however, as certain facts limit its effectiveness. The eighteenth century is an epoch of great actors. The playhouse managers are not doing bad business. The reason is that the aristocracy has never withheld its patronage from this form of amusement, above all, it is true, from its more frivolous aspects; so that the theatre remains one of the centres of fashionable and intellectual life; and the upper middle class, which shares with the nobility in social influence, accepts generally, on this point as on others, the traditional preferences of a class whose culture is of longer standing.

It is therefore not for want of spectators that there are fewer masterpieces in the drama of this age. The dearth of genius is first of all a fact, for which, perhaps, one must not seek any explanation other than its normality itself, if it is true that the

phases of supreme flowering are exceptional, and that it is useless to judge by the English Renascence standard what one should expect after it.

One can explain this fact, however, by some precise causes. The new society, of a mixed character, in which middle-class traits are coming more and more into evidence, is not hostile to the theatre; despite the persistent animosity of Collier's followers, it even favours it. But public taste is now acquiring a common flavour; as if the authority of a narrow and refined circle were becoming less strong, the tendency of the average theatregoer to demand easy pleasures—a tendency of long standing certainly, against which the greatest of the Elizabethans had had to contend —finds less counter-weight in the judgment of the élite, or it may be that the élite itself has lost its power. Addison had raised his voice in vain against Italian opera. The years which follow see the rise of the pantomime, which takes up again, while lowering the standard, the still living tradition of the old masques; and the success of the *Beggar's Opera* of Gay sets the fashion for a *light kind (the ballad-opera) which is so to speak* the popular rudiment of the comic opera.

Serious opera, and ballad-opera, are brilliantly successful throughout the century; and the settings, the scenery and the costumes attain a wealth of effect as yet unequalled. These material means draw the attention of the audience to their profit. At the same time, the spirit of the staging becomes more realistic; without attempting as yet the local colouring of Romanticism, it gives the personages traits that are too clearly defined, and an aspect that is too individual and particular, not to impair the instinctive sympathy of the spectator; for by reducing the indefinite adaptability of types of general humanity, it substitutes figures that are more precise, and to which we may less easily accustom ourselves.

It has also been pointed out that the very merit of the actors has contributed in bringing about this decline. On a better lighted stage, which in 1762 has been cleared of all those privileged people who used to crowd upon it, physical characterisation and gesticulation assume greater importance. A line of eminent actors, of whom Macklin, Garrick, Mrs. Siddons and Kemble are only the most famous, keep up the enthusiasm of the public, but attach it to such or such a part, such or such an interpretation,

such or such a piece of stagecraft, or even such or such a player, rather than to the play itself. The sovereign influence of Garrick, which was in other respects fecund, and did much to spread the cult of Shakespeare, was not without attracting the attention of a public, already given over to superficial enjoyments, in the direction of the outward means of expression.

These diverse reasons can throw some light upon the decadence of the theatre. It is also certain that the imaginative, emotional needs which it used not long ago to satisfy are now catered for more directly and in a way that is more suitable to all tastes. The novel draws its vitality from a fund of realism, pathos and humour which is the very stuff of comedy and drama; it also creates a fictive image of life, and allows it to impose upon minds the rich sense with which it is charged. De Foe and Richardson do not stir up any uneasiness in the Puritan conscience; the novel escapes the reproaches which the stage has incurred, and which the atmosphere of a playhouse, if not the play produced, still justifies to a greater or lesser degree. It lends itself better to prolonged and serious meditations; it has an incomparable grasp of reality and the problems of life. The modern novel, once fully developed, inherited during the eighteenth century the larger and nobler part of what was the former function of the theatre.

It cannot be said, however, that all the social influences converged towards a drying-up of the source of dramatic inspiration; there were some which tended to vivify by renewing it. When the conscience of the middle class sanctioned a return to the theatre, it brought with it original tastes; and more broadly speaking, the psychological movement which from then onwards accompanied the advent to power of this class in the national life, was strongly impregnated with the forces of a new literature. Sentimental comedy was already in being. The plays of Steele could easily have seemed to open the way for a whole new order of effects.

It is a fact that the middle-class spirit did not show itself a potent inspiration so far as the theatre was concerned. The form in which it vested itself there did not find any great master to handle it. The reason was not that it suffered in itself from any æsthetic inferiority. But in becoming detached from the prestige of social rank, as from that of the past and of distance

in space, the drama of modern times limits itself to the resources of realism. In order to exist completely, it has therefore to exhaust reality, and draw from life all that life can give to art. Moral, social and philosophical problems must be brought, without the slightest reserve, into its ken. This unlimited widening of the horizon supposes a boldness, a liberty on the part of the writer, a previous culture on the part of the audience, which English did not possess before the end of the nineteenth century. Then only could drama utilise the life and thought of the time to fullest advantage.

Sentimental comedy and middle-class drama represent in Johnson's day a mere promise of what lies ahead, a form that is uncertain, unconscious of its future development. However timid and mediocre this form may appear to be on the average, it introduces a principle of renovation into the dramatic literature of the time. Its characteristics link it up by intimate affinities with the renascence of the national spirit. It remains distinct, no doubt, from Elizabethan tradition and the Shakespearean type of play, which enjoy throughout the course of this age a very marked renewal of favour; but it is in secret harmony with them, and its own influence tells along the same lines. This convergence has left definite traces; it is not by chance that the drama of Lillo and Moore often transposes the situations and themes of Shakespeare into a plane of contemporary realism.

The English theatre from 1730 to 1790 shows us the struggle of the new forms, in which sentiment is the animating force of inspiration, against the authority of regular comedy and tragedy, such as the Restoration had handed down to classicism. The most brilliant talents are on the classical side; on two occasions, the successors of George Colman, then of Goldsmith and Sheridan, seem definitively to eclipse all rival attempts, and by re-installing the spirit of comedy in favour, to discredit the confused efforts in which are expressed the needs of a morbid sensibility. But the moral transformation is stronger than the tested simplicity of the literary dogma, or than the talent of gifted individuals. The inner movement of minds irresistibly favours the realistic drama, or the mixed and semi-pathetic type of comedy; the instincts of the majority remain in the ascendant, and the theatre drifts back to the new forms, and also to mediocrity. These are in complete control by the end of the century.

2. *Middle-Class Drama; Lillo, Moore.*—The first group of works which calls for attention between 1730 and 1760 is the domestic drama of Lillo and Moore, which represents the counterpart of sentimental comedy in the plane of tragedy.

Lillo[1] is the first who authentically voices the bourgeois spirit in the theatre. By his extraction, his life and his outlook, he belongs to the trading class which is now beginning to be proud of its place in the State. A member of a dissenting sect, he has in him all the fund of Puritan instincts. His moral figure offers a marked resemblance to that of Richardson. But Richardson, of a more robust talent, is also more rigorous in the subjection of art to principles. Lillo's ambition is to be a man of letters; his plays, while constantly claiming to edify us, often make sacrifices to the profane tastes of the public that one cannot credit as being involuntary.

He has at least, one day, the courage to exploit to the full, in the realm of drama, the new order of which his social group tends to be the centre. While the middle class accepts the traditional culture imposed upon it by the aristocracy, it cherishes another ideal at heart. The urgent need for moralising and sentimentalising is one feature of it, but its character is also modern, in this sense that it is realistic, above all alive to the practical aspects of life, and thus to the contemporary aspects; at the same time it does not stand for equality but for democracy, in so far as the middle class demands an extension of privileges. The natural effect of these spontaneous preferences would have been the substitution, for the older canons, of certain values of sentiment, borrowed from the actual everyday life of those whom the artist sees in action about him. And numerous signs allow one to perceive that this revolutionary transformation of art is preparing, that it exists obscurely in middle-class society. But the latter, as a whole, is too docile to shake off the established prestige, and the authority of classical traditions. Through snobbery, as through sincere respect, it accepts a culture that is already at hand. The reversing of values is belated, as compared

[1] George Lillo, born in 1693 in London, the son of a city jeweller, of Dutch origin, pursued the calling of his father, wrote for the stage a comic opera, *Silvia* (1730); a drama, *The London Merchant, or The History of George Barnwell*, 1731; a tragedy, *The Christian Hero*, 1735; two new dramas, *Fatal Curiosity*, 1736, *Marina*, 1738, and left other works at his death in 1739. *Works*, 1775. *London Merchant*, etc., ed. by Ward, 1906. See study by Hoffman, 1888 (Marburg).

with the social movement. De Foe remained an exception. In order to see all the effects of the spirit of modern and democratic realism, one has to wait the advent of Crabbe, Wordsworth and Dickens.

Lillo is another notable exception; and in some measure he has a following. The domestic drama he inaugurates is one of the principal expressions of the moral and social tendencies which contain the future in germ. In this lies the very great interest of his initiative. His boldness made a deep impression. People recalled the fact that it had precedents; Elizabethan tragedy brought the lowest grade of humanity on to the stage; and since then, Otway, Lee and Rowe had taken liberties with the custom of restricting the occasions for pathos to the doings of kings and princes. But indirect precaution brought back their works more or less to orthodox standards; and the passing of a whole century had concealed the familiar simplicity of the Elizabethan theatre. Now for the first time, theatregoers were invited to experience terror and pity at the sight of misfortunes of an exclusively bourgeois nature. *George Barnwell* is the story of an apprentice who is led by a courtesan to commit murder, and who expiates his crime.

Thus breaks up the illusion which indissolubly associated the greatness of dramatic emotion with the majesty of ranks removed from ordinary life. A true courage was required to brave so universal a prejudice.[1] This strength of purpose had in it a creative power, and Lillo's innovation has exercised an influence and left a trace both in England and on the Continent. But in every other respect his play is weak. Taking as his theme the subject of an old ballad, he wove out of it a drama of a very primitive outlook; where there is none of that true simplicity which often carries to a degree of grandeur the inventions of the sons of the people, but rather that conventional and oversimplified view of things in which an inborn vulgarity of taste is revealed. The action has the improbable atmosphere of a morality play; the edifying purpose of the author is everywhere prominent; the psychology deals in mere moral diagrams; the sentiment is declamatory; a regrettable desire for elegance makes

[1] Lillo in this play flourishes his standard quite openly. The dedication affirms that a domestic tragedy is more useful for morality than any other, since its field of application is wider. The piece contains an enthusiastic apology of commerce; a type of worthy merchant, generous, magnanimous, etc.

the language, at times, lose all sound frankness of expression. As in *Pamela*, the delicate situations are painfully emphasised. All this, however, is not shorn of an elementary kind of appeal to the feelings, rather analogous at bottom to that of Richardson, but robbed of any wealth of shades by the inevitable exaggeration of stage effects.

The dramatic work of Lillo is otherwise negligible. He had not the strength of will to apply his formula with any persistence; his career is one of singular lapses, irregular in its course, and betraying a very hesitant mind.

But in the history of literature he retains a place of primal importance. Not only did he break the spell which prevented the birth of domestic drama, but at the same stroke he destroyed the exclusive prestige of rhymed tragedy. *George Barnwell* is written in prose, if the other plays of Lillo return to the poetic form; and this prose, which is still in the bondage of stylistic habits foreign to spoken language, heralds the full liberty which it will one day acquire.

The influence of Lillo in France, where he directed towards middle-class drama the development already begun in lachrymose comedy, and where he found an enthusiastic imitator in Diderot; in Germany, where he was an active force both through his own works, and through the theories of Diderot, is one of the most perceptible traces of that communication of themes, which from then onwards assumes so great an importance in the inter-relations of European literatures, and which reveals the growing convergence of their developments.

In England, one must come to Moore [1] in order to find a worthy disciple of Lillo. He is even superior to his master, although he does not possess the other's initiative.

In its main features, the art of *The Gamester* differs in no way from that of *George Barnwell*. We have here the same moralising story of a humble or at least an average lot; of the ruin caused by passion in the familiar setting of life; the same search after the emotional in the consequences of the fall of a soul; the same complacent sentimentalising. But the play is animated by the energy of a vigorous temperament; this tempera-

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ment, while rough and awkward, is nevertheless endowed with some dramatic intuition; it is capable of a simplified psychology, without any originality, but acceptable to our inner sense. Despite the improbabilities of the plot, the conventional devices, the false mechanism of characters who are too well aware of themselves, manifest themselves too clearly, and influence one another too easily, the action has force and logic; a sombre poetry emanates from certain tragic situations. Reminiscences of Shakespeare—and they are numerous—do not appear too much out of place in this atmosphere. One can understand the admiration of Diderot for this play, and how he found therein the full realisation of his own dramatic ideal.

3. *Fielding, Foote, Colman, etc.*—In contrast with middle-class drama and sentimental comedy,[1] the traditional theatre offers us numerous works, of a very diverse and very unequal quality, among which one must not look for too precise a kinship. This large and scattered group could, however, be termed "classical"; the plays which compose it are almost immune from sentimentalism; their inspiration is derived rather from the intellectual sources of literature; they respect the forms which time has consecrated, and obey precepts of ancient standing, even while they show some hankering for independence. One can distinguish among them the regular tragedies, the comic comedies, and the parodies, where the intention of the writer harmonises easily with the spirit of an age of satire.

This group as a whole is, generally speaking, opposed in its tendencies to that which precedes it; but the opposition is rather in the nature of a secret hostility than a declared war. The revolt against the excesses of sentiment in the theatre cannot be said as yet to have truly revealed itself. Certain individual affinities or sympathies even link up such or such of the representatives of classicism with writers of the other type. Fielding, who will become the avowed adversary of Richardson—until the day when the contagion of sentiment will also affect him—is a useful aid to Lillo in his early career and writes a prologue for one of his dramas. His generous humanity approves of the broader social inspiration animating this new literary kind.

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Regular tragedy is not productive of any masterpieces. The *Cato* of Addison remains an isolated success, not to be equalled by either the *Busiris* of Young (1719) or the *Mariamne* of Fenton (1723). In the course of the years which follow, the influence of Voltaire stimulates the vitality of classical drama, the more efficiently as he himself while in England has modified and enlarged his own ideal. His chief works are translated and imitated.[1] The name of Aaron Hill[2] is connected with these adaptations, among which Zara proves a popular success. Later, a version of *Horace (The Roman Father,* 1750) by William Whitehead, still makes a lasting impression.

The heroic tragedies of the Restoration, meanwhile, are yet enjoying popular favour. All the romanticism and convention implied in their extravagance is shown up in the colder light of a more reasonable age; and middle-class influences, the obscure need for a return to nature and to simple truth, count for something in the reaction of irony which is shaping itself out against Lee and Dryden. It is in this light that the parodies of Fielding and Carey acquire their true meaning. Profoundly classical in their deeper inspiration, they only touch the correct dramas of the school of Addison in passing, and take effect merely on their surface weaknesses.

The *Chrononhotonthologos* of Henry Carey (1734) is a truculent attack, and one that exhausts in a few scenes the comic vein of a facile satire. There is more humour and a richer inventiveness in the *Tom Thumb* of Fielding (1730); but the developed form of the same farce, the *Tragedy of Tragedies* (1731), with its precise allusions and the erudite and conscientious commentary that accompanies it, falls somewhat into the fault of a laboured caricature.[3] The law of this kind of writing is that boredom should not arise from a too stressed criticism of boredom. . . . Fielding is happier in a spontaneous phantasy such as the *Covent Garden Tragedy* (1733), and in the free expressions of his joyous verve, where literary parody com-

[1] In addition to the plays adapted by Hill, *Brutus, Mahomet, L'Orphelin de la Chine, L'Ecossaise, L'Indiscret, Oreste, Tancrède, Les Scythes, Sémiramis,* were imitated on the English stage. Other native dramas show the influence of Voltaire. See Lounsbury, *Shakespeare and Voltaire,* 1902.

[2] Aaron Hill, 1685-1750, poet and dramatist, was an interesting figure in the literary and social life of this age. *Zara,* 1736; *Alzira,* 1736; *Merope,* 1739. *Works,* 4 vols., 1763. See D. Brewster, *A. Hill,* etc., 1913.

[3] See edition by J. T. Hillhouse, 1918.

mingles with a juvenile mockery of society, as in *The Author's Farce* (1730), or *Pasquin* and *The Historical Register* (1736).

Such, indeed, are also the tone and merit of his comedies,[1] which are very diverse in form, and range from farce to character studies. They are the light, rapid work of a genius who has not yet lived long enough to be himself, but one can feel in them the touch of a master; and one would perhaps be inclined to praise them more, if they did not rather often overstep the standard of propriety, and if the power of the novelist did not by comparison injure their fragile mirth. They bear hardly any resemblance to Congreve, with whom they are often connected; but by their movement, vivacity, easy turn, naturalness, and the shafts of satire they dart forth with playful and felicitous grace, they are not without reminding us of Molière in his early years. They have not the latter's strong hold upon characters, or his passion for moral truth; their relative penetration is rather owing to the careless pertness, to the frank sincerity, of a mind that scoffs without respect at all the values of which it will not accept the claims.

This sincerity has something generous about it. Fielding's attack upon the oppression of the weak by the strong, the rigour of the law, the unworthiness of some magistrates, is already shaping itself. It is thus no wonder that Walpole's administration should have taken offence at a liberty that was becoming dangerous; the political allusions of *Pasquin* and *The Historical Register* counted for much in the Licensing Act of 1737, which reduced the authorised theatres to the number of two, and created a preventive censure. Fielding now abandoned the stage. He had created a type of play that was lighter, more supple than the traditional piece in five acts, and had accentuated the movement which was carrying comedy to the study of contemporary manners.

His influence is very apparent in Samuel Foote,[2] whose short

[1] The principal are: *Love in Several Masques*, 1728, *The Temple Beau*, 1730; *Rape upon Rape, or The Justice Caught in His Own Trap*, 1730; *Don Quixote in England*, 1734; and two adaptations from Molière. *The Mock Doctor*, 1732; *The Miser*, 1733.

[2] 1720-77; an actor and remarkable mimic, he received permission to give at the Haymarket Theatre comic variety performances from which evolved by degrees a third authorised scene. Mention may be made of the following among his numerous farces. *The Englishman in Paris*, 1753; *The Minor*, 1760, *The Mayor of Garratt*, 1764, *The Lame Lover*, 1770; *The Maid of Bath*, 1771, etc. *Works*, 3 vols, 1830. See P. Fitzgerald, *S. Foote*, 1910.

and lively plays are a gallery of satirical pictures. Comedy with him is hardly to be distinguished any longer from farce; but it possesses a stage quality, a life, a movement, which have lost nothing of their value with the passing of time. Despite its superficiality and injustice, despite the personal allusions which to-day are obscure, the grossness of tone, and the sentimental episodes with which Foote thought it fit to burden occasionally his ironical and cynical work, in order to keep in touch with the fashion of the day, the whole remains amusing, and of a rich interest for the historian of manners.[1]

Of an equally versatile and less personal talent, Murphy,[2] however, gives evidence of the ingenious skill that, in this age of decadence, was possessed by the very writers in whose hands comedy was degenerating. He creates nothing, and cannot be said to renew profoundly any of the subjects he borrows; but he has a gift of form, a verve, a cleverness, able to sustain in a pleasing way the interest of three or four acts. His farces, wholly surface work, succeed in being gay; among his more ambitious efforts, which tend towards the moralising, if not lachrymose theatre, one play, *The Way to Keep Him*, adapts a French theme to English manners with felicity and brilliance.

Between Fielding and Goldsmith, it is George Colman[3] who dominates regular comedy. With him, there is at first a marked hostility both in temperament and in principle towards sentimental writing. He begins with a satire of the artificial exaltation which has been encouraged by novels of the Richardson type *(Polly Honeycombe)*; while the *Tom Jones* of Fielding, with the admixture of other elements, becomes in his hands a lively, amusing study of the struggle between a prosaic and weak husband, and a wife driven to madness by jealousy *(The Jealous Wife)*. But the taste of the public for something of moving

[1] One of the most popular of the pure comedies of this age was *The Suspicious Husband* of John Hoadley, 1747.

[2] Arthur Murphy, 1727-1805, wrote regular tragedies like *Zenobia*, 1768, *The Grecian Daughter*, 1772; farces like *The Upholsterer*, 1758, *The Citizen*, 1763; comedies—in which the imitations and reminiscences of Molière are frequent—such as *The Way to Keep Him*, 1760; *All in the Wrong*, 1761. *Works*, 7 vols., 1786.

[3] George Colman the Elder, 1732-94, dramatist and theatrical director, translated Terence, edited the works of Beaumont and Fletcher, wrote comedies, amongst others *Polly Honeycombe*, 1760; *The Jealous Wife*, 1761; *The Clandestine Marriage*, 1766, and operettas; readapted masques, dramas or comedies of the English and foreign theatres: *Philaster*, 1763; *King Lear*, 1768; *Comus*, 1772; *The English Merchant* (*L'Ecossaise* of Voltaire), 1767, etc. *Works*, 4 vols., 1777.

appeal in the theatre is stronger than doctrinal preferences; and Colman's best play (*The Clandestine Marriage,* written in collaboration with Garrick), which probably represents the frankest expression of the comic spirit after Fielding and before Goldsmith, is full, despite the quality of its verve, of the seeking after the pleasure reaped from the tender emotions of the heart.

4. *The Return to Shakespeare; the Theatre of Sentiment.*—Side by side with the vein of orthodox dramatic art, however, is to be found abundant evidence of the change which is taking place in the instincts themselves of the cultured theatregoers. In the course of the struggle waged against tradition, the new forms are favoured by the atmosphere of a time when sentiment is extending its sway in spite of all.

The years from 1730 to 1760 represent the period in which the popularity of Shakespeare effaces that of all his rivals; he now takes his pre-eminent place in the favour of the uneducated and educated alike. His dramas, often mutilated, and disfigured by the freest adaptations, at times owe their greatest success to the least profound of their aspects. But the cult of Shakespeare is a symptom of the evolution in taste; it corresponds with a general, and almost universal need for a truth and an intensity, of which the free creations of the Elizabethans supply the fullest and most direct sensation[1] Despite the compromises and the transitions from one form to another which contemporary taste establishes, it is obvious that classical tragedy is losing all that Shakespearean drama is gaining.

A great actor, Garrick,[2] stimulated this renewal of enthusiasm. The director of a theatre and himself a dramatist, he adapts, stages and plays in more than half of Shakespeare's works. His versions of masterpieces which to-day command greater respect are not always happy. But he adds to the influence of his selections that of his own art, of which the sincerity, suppleness and naturalness contrast with the cold and stilted style of playing, the emphatic monotonous diction which prevailed before him.

[1] For the *Essay* of Mrs Montagu on Shakespeare, see below, chap. vii. sect. 5

[2] David Garrick, 1717-79, directed Drury Lane Theatre from 1747 to 1776 and acted in most of the plays he produced In addition to his adaptations of Shakespeare, etc., his dramatic work was copious *Dramatic Works,* 3 vols., 1798. See Fitzgerald, *Life of G.,* 1899; Hedgcock, *David Garrick et ses amis français,* 1911; Mrs. Parsons, *Garrick and His Circle,* 1906

To the same deep need for naturalness and moving truth one must attribute the great success, both in Edinburgh and in London, of a drama, the *Douglas* of Home,[1] where amid the moralising naïvety and conventional declamation are to be found notes of simplicity, strong evocations, and descriptions of Scottish scenery. The defects of the play are to-day very apparent; the contemporaries were above all struck by the refreshing atmosphere which an historical theme, a primitive colouring, a style that seeks unadorned forcefulness and at times finds it, brought into tragedy.

Sentimental comedy, lastly, was maintaining its sway; from 1760 to 1770 it shows the larger output and the more brilliant successes. The fact that Kelly's[2] *False Delicacy* coincided with the first venture of Goldsmith as a dramatist has given this play the importance of a manifesto in defence of sentiment against irony. But it is of a mixed character; it preaches an ideal of simplicity in the manner of Rousseau; and while it cannot resist the seductive appeal of emotion, at the same time it adopts a critical attitude towards any over-refined or exaggerated fondness for it. Of a purer and less alloyed character is the sentimental effusion to be found in Whitehead (*The School for Lovers*, 1762), Mrs. Sheridan (*The Discovery*, 1763), Isaac Bickerstaff (*The Maid of the Mill*, 1765); Mrs. Griffiths (*The School for Rakes*, 1769); and especially in Richard Cumberland,[3] the leader of this school. In his most typical works—*The Brothers, The West Indian, The Fashionable Lover*—the interweaving of a plot rich in unexpected incidents and discoveries of lost heirs with scenes for the most part moving and edifying, and with a comic vein used merely as a relief, wholly episodical and secondary, answers to tastes from which the melodrama will evolve about the early years of the following century. The full consciousness of the inclination which attracts an honest heart to sentiment, the stress laid on simple nature as the source of all virtues, the exaltation of charity, together with a tone of philosophic preaching, the justification of certain victims of social

[1] John Home, 1722-1808; *Douglas*, 1756. *Works*, 3 vols. 1822.

[2] Hugh Kelly, 1739-77; *False Delicacy*, 1768; *A Word to the Wise*, 1770; *The School for Wives*, 1773, etc. *Works*, 1778.

[3] Richard Cumberland, 1732-1811; *The Brothers*, 1769; *The West Indian*, 1771; *The Fashionable Lover*, 1772. See his *Memoirs* (2 vols., 1807); and for his works: Mrs. Inchbald, *British Theatre*; S. T. Williams, *Richard Cumberland*, 1917.

prejudices, go to make these plays the composite expression of all the tendencies which at this moment are amalgamating in the English and European cult of sensibility.

5. *The Revival of Comedy; Goldsmith and Sheridan.*—In the literary fabric of this age, however, were combined the opposing strands of serious sentiment and rational scepticism; there was a whole order of temperaments which lachrymose comedy could not satisfy. Moreover, it awoke the sense of incongruity in minds other than those of a dry and ironical disposition; all who by taste preferred the clearly defined forms of art must impatiently endure the reign of a hybrid, paradoxical type of play. Lastly, the power of pure comedy, the joyous gift of laughter for its own sake, were granted to some talented writers less hopelessly fond of unreasonable tears; and some playwrights were found who could restore a short-lived splendour to comedy through the virtue of their inventive skill and verve.

No one knew better than Goldsmith the charm that lay in emotions sympathetically shared in and felt; but his rich, supple nature was too astute not to perceive the weakness of an avowed and too easy bid for the pleasure of shedding gentle tears. If comedy thus was to trespass upon tragedy, where would humour have the right to express itself? On two occasions, and with unequal success, he tried to revive sincere laughter on the stage. *The Good-Natured Man* is a still timid attempt. Goldsmith[1] here pokes fun at the excess of a wholly instinctive and unreasonable charity, deprived of the moral strength without which no real goodness can exist. It was thus an attack against sentimentalism in its very essence, and indeed round this central theme we have the unfolding of episodes that really breathe a contagious gaiety. But the hero, instead of being ridiculous, makes an irresistible claim upon our affection; and from the play there emanates a pleasing sweetness of soul which in many respects brings it closer to the lachrymose type of play. *She Stoops to Conquer* is further removed from it. A piquant observation, elements of ingenious and new realism, a welling forth of pleasantry that never dries up, and bathes even the rare moments when emotion could rise—all go to make this charming comedy

[1] See above, Book III chap iii. sect. 3. He has given the reasons for his attitude in *A Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy* (*Westminster Magazine*, 1773).

an unalloyed source of amusement. But it endears itself too much to endanger at all efficiently a fashion that sought to please by playing upon the sensitive chords of human nature.

Of still greater brilliance, the efforts of Sheridan[1] had no more lasting results. With him, however, comedy regains, in addition to the shining beauty of form, almost all the ease of movement it had with a Congreve. Here the joy of a feast of the mind, in which satire speaks to the intelligence more than to the moral sense, suffices unto itself. It is fed by sallies of the most fertile verve; and a gift of style equal to that of the best classical writers secures for every line a finished quality of art.

This liberty with regard to any moralising aim on the part of the author is further completed by a critical independence towards sentiment. While in Bath and London, Sheridan had frequented the circles of fashion, where the cult of wit and irony was sharpened into a disparaging hostility to the Puritanism of the middle class. In such surroundings he had breathed a remnant of the belated atmosphere of the Restoration. No doubt, the desire for sincere simplicity which forms the deeper strain of his nature revolts against the artificiality of such aims; he writes his most amusing comedy against the poisoned slander of the drawing-rooms; but he is too much the master of epigram to make it really hateful to us; his thesis has scarcely any power of conviction, and is only a pretext for sparkling dialogues. His own ideal is that of a lively and spontaneous light-heartedness, the carefree temper of which conceals the best instincts. In the sentimental attitude then in vogue, he thus denounces the suspicious excess, the association with a hollow moralism, the hypocrisy which it implies; his Joseph Surface is a Tartuffe of tender compassion and fine

[1] Richard Brinsley Sheridan, born in Dublin in 1751, came of a family which had already produced many literary talents, crossed to England and studied at Harrow; married at Bath, in romantic circumstances, the daughter of the composer, Linley, and supplied the stage with farces, a comic opera, *The Duenna*, 1775, an adaptation of Vanbrugh (*A Trip to Scarborough*, 1777), three comedies: *The Rivals*, 1775; *The School for Scandal*, 1777; *The Critic*, 1779, which were very successful. Director of Drury Lane Theatre in succession to Garrick, he entered Parliament in 1780, became Secretary of State, and one of the most noteworthy figures in the political world. He indicted Warren Hastings (1787-94), and with Fox defended the principle of the French Revolution. He died in 1816. *Works*, ed. by Stainforth, 1874; *Theatre*, ed. by Knight, 1906; ed. by Nettleton, 1906; *The Plays of R. B. Sheridan*, ed. by I. A. Williams, 1927; *The Rivals*, ed. by Balston, 1913; *School for Scandal*, ed. by Aitken, 1897; *Critic*, ed. by *Aitken*, 1897. See Mrs. Oliphant, *Sheridan* (English Men of Letters), 1883; Sanders, *Life of Sheridan*, 1890; Rae, *Sheridan*, 1896; Sichel, *Sheridan*, 1909; Barbeau, *Une Ville d'Eaux au xviii^e Siècle*, etc., 1904.

maxims. In the same way, he is irritated by the pretensions of heroic tragedy to a highflown eloquence and sublimity, and he adds one of the most amusing parodies to the list which *The Rehearsal* had opened. But when in his turn he comes to compose a tragedy, it is not less declamatory than the others. . . . His work, without being in any way didactic, nevertheless recommends and suggests a sort of natural morality, an optimistic confidence in the goodness of man's heart, a philosophy in the manner of Diderot, which is not free from the diffuse sentimentalism of the period.

There is thus no deep unity in the tendencies of his theatre; and unity is not either the forte of his plays. They combine with skill diverse elements, plots and themes; they are amalgams of successful, sometimes admirable scenes, rather than organic masterpieces. Sheridan is not a psychologist, but a shrewd and penetrating observer; he is more able to perceive the secret movements of vanity or envy, than to construct characters. He knows how to create the ridiculous from the mechanisms which are built in us by the prejudices of the mind and the distortions of judgment; but the province of comedy in which he most readily moves is that of situations and verbal virtuosity. Here at least he moves with astonishing mastery.

The Rivals is a youthful, gay comedy of no great substance, but one in which the joyous fancy of the author creates an atmosphere of almost poetical unreality; over a background of imitation—memories of the Restoration, and of Molière—there stand out figures that are new, or appear to be so. Without daring to disappoint the public completely in its sentimental expectation, the play outlines in the name of sound reason a reaction of temperament and taste against the whole range of pre-Romantic preferences. *The School for Scandal* combines several plots, through the saving virtue of an irresistible gaiety and talent; and Sheridan in it has given the English theatre some of its wittiest scenes. *The Critic*, less equal in quality, again gives its full freedom to a rather cruel, satirical verve, which had been somewhat repressed in the preceding play by the moral purpose of the author; in addition to the burlesque, derisive fun poked at the bombastic type of writing—a satire imitated from Buckingham and Fielding—the comedy offers us a broad lively study of the social forms which the secret strife of exasperated pride takes

with authors and critics alike. Here again, many passages recall Molière, and are not unworthy of him.

Sheridan's achievement in comedy, however great its success, did not destroy the vitality of the sentimental play; the contagion of a seductive vogue was stronger than the example of an individual and transitory triumph. In the mediocrity into which dramatic production falls back after this writer, the last efforts of classical tragedy, now dying, are paralleled by comedies in which laughter is only the seasoning element of an emotional delectation. The plays of Hannah More (*Percy*, a philosophic tragedy, 1771), Miss Lee (*The Chapter of Accidents*, 1780), Burgoyne (*The Heiress*, 1786), Mrs. Cowley (*The Runaway*, 1776), whether or not they make an effort to break away and follow the path opened up by Sheridan, do not free themselves from the thraldom of sentiment, and link up lachrymose drama with the revolutionary theatre of Holcroft and Mrs. Inchbald. An optimistic and soft conception of human nature henceforth prevents the general public from tasting any pleasure in a coldly ironical picture of life.

To be consulted: A. B. Baker, *History of the London Stage*, etc., 1904; Bernbaum, *The Drama of Sensibility*, 1915; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. x. chaps. iv. ix.; vol. xi. chap. xii; Gaiffe, *Le Drame en France au xviii^e siècle*, 1910; Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage*, etc., 1832; Gosse, *History of Eighteenth Century Literature*, 1889; Kilbourne, *Alterations and Adaptations of Shakespeare*, 1906; Lanson, *Nivelle de la Chaussée et la Comédie larmoyante*, 1887; Sir S. Lee, *Shakespeare and the Modern Stage*, 1907; B. Matthews, *The Development of the Drama*, 1904; Millar, *The Mid-Eighteenth Century*, 1902; A. Nicoll, *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama, 1750-1800*, 1927; Mrs. Parsons, *Garrick and His Circle*, 1906; Sharp, *Short History of the English Stage*, 1909; Seccombe, *The Age of Johnson*, 1899; Sichel, *Life of Sheridan*, 1909; Tupper, *Representative English Dramas from Dryden to Sheridan*, 1915.

CHAPTER VII

RATIONALISM

1. *Persistence of the Rational Current.*—Among the mixed tendencies of this epoch of transition, there persists a strong current of rational thought, either pure, or diffused in a general attitude of mind.

The eighteenth century still thinks itself, and indeed in many respects it still is, the age of Reason. The need of enlightenment, the belief in a progress of civilisation towards the understanding of reality, and through this towards a better order, do not possess in England such a clear consciousness, such an aggressive force as in France; the original quality of the social tone and of manners, the authority of religion, do not permit so open a struggle between the powers of tradition and those of criticism. Middle-class circles react, obscurely and persistently, in the direction of an instinctive, obstinate preference for the rights of morality and sentiment. But over political frontiers is created an international rhythm, in which all nations of advanced culture participate. From one end to the other of Europe, philosophy is in fashion. French influences on English soil stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the intrepidity of the reflective mind. Personal relations are established between the writers of both peoples. The cult of Voltaire and Rousseau among the English has its counterpart in the anglomania of the French. Innumerable are the facts connected with the full history of this reciprocal action, which becomes in the middle of the century a more active exchange, a closer intercourse than ever before; it cannot be studied here. On the whole, and despite the pronounced divergence presented by the influence of Rousseau, the radiation of French thought in England adds something to the spontaneous power of the current of intellectualism.

Besides the philosophers, this current makes itself felt in the works of the historians, who more or less apply to their study of humanity's past the taste for disinterested truth; in those of the

essayists and critics, who are prone to analyse life and ideas; and also in those of the letter-writers and diarists, who paint a picture of their time without much illusion, and adapt a homely morality to the exigencies of society. These last belong, all but a few, to the wealthier classes; they have the culture of the aristocracy; and their attitude clearly reveals what subsists of an elegant and cosmopolitan rationalism in the highest social circles. A whole aspect of the age of Johnson revives in the works of a Chesterfield and a Walpole.

2. *Philosophy; Hume.*—David Hume,[1] as has often been noted, passed the decisive years of the formative period of his life at La Flèche, where Descartes had sojourned. In a sense, he is the Descartes of England; his philosophic enterprise is just as daring, and its influence no less revolutionary. But Descartes carried out his research with the direct vigour of a spiritualist for whom the pre-eminence of thought was an implicit fact of experience. Hume, more empiric and objective, decides to look for the explanation of the world and the laws of life, not in the thinking self, but in that more complex reality, human nature. Locke had already emphasized the method of observation, and what will become at a later date psychology. Hume, who is just as positive and realistic in his tendencies, brings to his examination a superior power of acute intelligence and logic. The first form, and the most uncompromising, of his philosophy, is an analysis the rigour of which has never been surpassed.

His originality lies essentially in the fact that he places in the constitution of human nature the centre, round which are

[1] David Hume, born in Edinburgh in 1711, of rural gentry stock, studied law, essayed commerce, and resided for several years in France, where he wrote the first two volumes of his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), which, however, escaped notice, as well as a third volume (1740). His *Essays, Moral and Political* (1741-48), had more success. After the publication of *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), *Political Discourses* (1752), appeared *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* (1753-4; revised and enlarged until 1777). Already attracted to history, he published in fragments his *History of Great Britain* (1754-61), which relieved him of pecuniary worries. On his appointment as Secretary to the English Embassy in Paris, he was very warmly received (1763-65); in 1766 there took place the quarrel with Rousseau, who had accompanied him to England. He settled in Edinburgh, where he died in 1776; his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* appeared in 1779; his *Autobiography* in 1777. *Treat. Hum. Nat.*, ed. by Selby-Bigge, 1896; *Essays*, ed. by Green and Grose, 1875. See Burton, *Life of Hume*, 1846; G. Lechartier, *David Hume*, 1900; Teisseire, *Les Essais économiques de Hume*, 1902; Huxley, *Hume* (English Men of Letters), 1879; Thomson, *David Hume*, 1912.

organized our knowledge of the universe and all the sciences. The doctrine of Kant will merely give this subjectivism the form of a system. He thus questions that inner reality which is the only one that we can immediately comprehend, and only finds in it either more intense phenomena—what he names impressions—or others more feeble, which recall the first, and which he names ideas. This mental world is governed by a sort of universal tendency—association—just as what is known to the scientist as the physical world is governed by attraction. Associated and combined by the imagination in everyday life, our ideas organise themselves in accordance with privileged relationships when we make an effort to know: such are resemblance, identity, space, time, cause and effect, etc. What is the origin of such relationships, and of those, especially, like space, time, and the causal relation, which seem to be independent of the nature of the objects they unite? Hume sees in them only the implicit generalisation of a connection which we have always or almost always experienced. We can never actually perceive the cause of a fact; but the sight of a flame a short distance away is accompanied by heat, and we connect the one sensation with the other by a causal link.

Thus the demonstration that aimed at finding a base for science ends in depriving it of that existence outside of ourselves, of that metaphysical reality, without which it was agreed that human thought would lose its indispensable support. Hume inflicts the most bewildering shock upon the minds that are secure in the confident feeling of a divine or natural order; the universe is broken up into an indefinite series of phenomena which our various needs group together according to uncertain formulæ, and where in the fleeting unsubstantiality of everything we find no fixed support, neither permanent bodies, nor an ego that perceives itself as a durable being. All is relative, and even mathematics are constructed only by eliminating the accidents and irregularities of things. To know is therefore to invent; to believe is to register the authority of an idea which is accompanied by an impression of irresistible force.

This absolute scepticism was to be slightly tempered at a later date, and to receive a less inflexible expression. But the philosophical figure of Hume is fixed by it; he remains the most purely intellectual of British thinkers; and no doubt his Scottish

origin goes some way to explain this character. He followed his thought to the end with a quiet intrepidity, obeying no other passion than that for truth.

In other respects, he is none the less a man of his race and of his time. His ethics, wholly empirical, are based upon sentiment; following upon Hutcheson, he admits the existence of a natural sympathy in all, an instinct of disinterested benevolence; virtue, to him, is what satisfies the interest we take in others; vice is what wounds it. He also is affected by the wave of humanitarian optimism. To practical questions he spontaneously applies the utilitarian rule of action; mental doubt, here, yields to the necessity of living; and just like every other man, the sceptic has to affirm and even to believe. His religious ideas, of a very bold nature, never adopted the polemical form sought after by the French school of philosophers. His analysis of the miraculous tends to deny its existence; like Lucretius, he derives the need for faith from the emotions and anguish of the human lot; the "religion of nature" does not escape his criticism, and he cannot read in the order of the world the clear revelation of any providential plan; yet he does not deny every possibility of a prudent adhesion to such beliefs; indeed he seems to accept a vague deism. The irony with which he veils his thought in front of the ban placed by society upon the frank discussion of certain problems, is not aggressive, but discreet and as it were indulgent. There is in him a kind of amenity, which softens the hard tone of his intellectualism.

In politics, he is not a believer in the social contract. Necessity, he holds, has brought mankind together, and the struggle of each against all has given rise to a tacit understanding; but this progress has been wholly empirical; and it is the family, the simplest association for mutual aid, which has supplied the model to the state. His economic doctrine reacts against the mercantile system, and outlines a liberal criticism of the arbitrary interventions of the law.

The last word of this courageous and at the same time prudent thinker is a lesson in sceptical reserve, subservient to the imperious claims of life, and rather analogous to the agnosticism and positivism of the moderns, with a touch of that utilitarian wisdom which will be designated at a still later date as pragmatism. Hume therefore is not outside of the deeper tendencies of English

thought; he marks the extreme point attained by it in a phase of free rational activity. To-day his psychology is out of date, and so the construction which he raised collapses at its base. But the method implied in his criticism is of an ever fresh fecundity. He has shown the most accurate sense of the course which must be followed by the search after truth. The scientific and philosophic value of his work is inexhaustible.

It has also a literary value. Hume possesses the natural gift of clearness. His most subtle analyses are astonishingly lucid. The three years during which he was in intimate contact with the French tongue have left their mark upon him. His language is sober, terse, classical, and as supple as it is precise; his syntax has freedom and ease. Without sacrificing anything to art, he is a writer.

3. *History: Hume, Robertson, etc.*—Clarendon and Burnet were not yet historians in the strict sense of the word. After them, the very keen struggles between political parties stimulated the interest taken by the public in the nation's past, but at the same time such strife was not conducive to that serene attitude of mind necessary for the impartial narration of facts. Little by little, however, the appreciation of the value of texts becomes more widespread; the awakening of a curious interest in documents, which will not be without relation to the revival of imagination, is revealed in the publication of the collection of *Fœdera et Conventiones* by Rymer and Sanderson.[1] And under the influence of the reflective quest bearing on the moral problem of man, a precise knowledge of the development of mankind stands out as one of the indispensable elements of a sound philosophy.

It is therefore a philosopher who for the first time in England writes history in the modern acceptation of the term. Hume while in France had breathed an air that was charged with suggestions favourable to such an undertaking; the taste for erudition on the one hand, the search after general expositions on the other, had produced some noteworthy works in that country; the century of Voltaire promised to be engrossed by a vast intellectual inquiry into the varied nature of the world and the revolutions of mankind; the art of narration and analysis was carried very far; the *History of Charles XII.* had appeared. Hume and Robertson,

[1] Twenty volumes, 1704-35

in a style in which their contemporaries could distinguish a French influence, wrote historical works the inspiration of which is not far removed from that of Voltaire and Montesquieu.

Hume is aware of the link which in his opinion unites history with philosophy. The past contains the accumulated experience of the generations; an empirical wisdom will find in it the complement of the data which the present is able to offer; and from such source it will draw the most useful lessons with a view to what remains, after all, the true object of science: rules of conduct. Appointed librarian to the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh, he has at hand a precious and copious collection of documents; he finds in them the materials for his *History of England*.[1]

Although he prides himself upon the fact that his assertions are always accompanied by proofs, and that he gives us the references of his texts, he does not carry the scientific scruple of exactitude very far. His aim is to rise above events, group them, judge them, and extract what they have to teach. He looks upon the past from the point of view of a curious observer, who is penetrating, rather ironical, and no doubt given to finding positive explanations for human acts. This realism eliminates to too great an extent the moral factors of history; but it emphasises aspects of the course of things which have hitherto been neglected—social causes, beside political causes. The serenity to which Hume aspires, and which he really does possess to a remarkable degree, is not without some coldness; and if he is free from all passion, he is not from every prejudice. He has been reproached with having shown in his account a decided preference, in principle, for the thesis of the King's prerogative. The Whigs accused him of writing as a Tory. He reveals, in fact, like Voltaire, an instinctive weakness for order, and some mistrust towards the champions of public liberty, as of the Puritan religion. But the absolutism of the last sovereigns of the Stuart line is not any more to his liking.

While this work has lost all historical value to-day, it retains the merit of having raised the study of the past to the level of the highest literature. It has, without effort and quite naturally, the qualities of form—arrangement, orderliness, dignity of style,

[1] He treats, first of all, the reigns of James I. and Charles I., then continues his account to the Revolution of 1688; after which he retraces his steps and goes back to the origins of the nation.

clearness of language. Above all, it displays a breadth of view which gives the narration all its moral and philosophic import. His narrowness in certain respects, on points where the spirit of the time had not yet learned to feel without prejudice, may shock us. Hume speaks of the Middle Ages without the sympathy which imagination permits; he knows them but ill, and makes no attempt to improve his knowledge; all that is primitive or barbarous has scarcely any interest for him; he has no premonition of the rapid advance which is about to be made by the Romantic intuition of all early origins. His outlook has the precision, but also the limitations of a rationalism which has not yet reaped sufficient benefit from the repeated experience of the complexity of things. But in the normal and familiar plane of human affairs, he opens up a way for the interpretation of motive forces and the powers at work, in a word for the explanatory kind of history, which others after him will follow still further.

Robertson,[1] who like Hume is a Scotsman, achieves a speedier success among his compatriots by writing the history of Scotland. But his fame spreads immediately to England and the Continent. He has very serious merits; by the arrangement of his matter, the form, the clearness of his style, he recalls Hume, and in turn affords evidence of French influence.[2] He too has philosophical aims and ambitions. While his is not the penetrating vigour of Hume, he shows an even superior sense of the correlation of facts. From the first the reader is struck by his prudence and taste for precision; he creates the impression of a very safe mind, fully equipped for the pursuit of truth. He has been charged with not always having shown method in his utilisation of documents, and with having let himself he carried away by a rhetorical impulse in his last works. His *Charles V.*, which offers a general survey of the end of the Middle Ages, won many readers, down to the nineteenth century.

History, in its beginnings as a technical branch of writing, still presented an easy means of livelihood to authors who fared poorly in literature. Smollett and Goldsmith, after Hume, became historians in a secondary capacity; they pursued their task with talent, and one cannot deny them the advantage which one

[1] William Robertson, 1721-93; a Presbyterian minister, then Principal of the University of Edinburgh; *History of Scotland*, etc., 1759, *History of Charles V.*, 1769; *History of America*, 1771. *Works*, 8 vols., 1825.

[2] Notably that of Voltaire (*Essai sur les Mœurs*).

grants to Hume, of finding a link between this second activity and their main creative work. The novel of manners was not less directly than moral philosophy a preparation for the understanding of man's past. In his continuation of Hume's *History of England, Smollett* [1] did not equal him. Quickly written, his narrative reveals a certain haste, while he does not bring the same vigour to bear in his interpretation of facts. His work is clear, however, lively, and reads pleasantly. It is because of the realism of his thought, together with his somewhat narrow but penetrating psychology, that Smollett occupies a rather honourable place among writers who had not as yet an exacting sense of the historical method.

The work of Goldsmith [2] is a series of familiar letters, supposed to have been written by a man of noble birth to his young son. The matter is almost entirely borrowed; but Goldsmith knows how to give judicious advice upon the study of history, and in a certain measure has done original work by adapting his narrative to the imagination of youth. He does not dare to grant full expression to his personality, and the charm of his style suffers somewhat from this constraint.

4. *The Essays of Hume and Goldsmith.*—The essays of Hume occupy an original place halfway between pure philosophy and the ethics of everyday life. They are more compact than the witticisms or the amusements with a serious intent, after the fashion of the *Spectator*, or even the judicious but somewhat oratorical dissertations of Johnson. Although Hume wanted to tone down the too concentrated doctrine of his first work, his thought has too direct a motion, his style too great a clearness, for the expression ever to develop to any further length than what is strictly indispensable. These shorter writings, which are at times very brief, and always terse, are models of the difficult art, less English than French, of explaining in an easy way an analysis implying manifold and precise shades.

The subjects treated are of a very varied nature. If one passes over those which merely reiterate the ideas of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, the rest deal with political, economic and

[1] First of all, he compiled a complete history, then he developed the modern part in 5 volumes, from 1688 to the accession of George II., and left at his death a sixth volume (1760-65).

[2] *An History of England in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to His Son*, 1764.

social, or with moral and religious, or again with æsthetic and literary matters. The personality of Hume is here revealed more liberally than in his chief works. It appears to be singularly intuitive and supple, beneath the cold and polished surface of a rational scepticism. Hume is a thinker of extreme perspicacity, endowed with a very fine sense of truth. This he owes to a keen and fresh perception, to a vigorous grasp of the elusive, obscure realities of collective life or of consciousness. Whether they treat of artistic problems or of constitutional relations in the state, it is the psychologist who supplies the main force and value of these essays. It is not a question here of systematic psychology, such as Hume conceives, and such as has long since been outgrown; but of a much more efficient effort to get at the secret connections of objects in the inner world, whether these objects belong to it, or whether it only reflects and unifies them. And this wealth of moral knowledge, which goes even to the point of divination, is made accessible to all by the clearness, the self-possession of a serene intelligence, which one might perhaps reproach with an utter lack of feeling, if it did not wrap itself up in a kind of very sincere benignity. Hume is the most complete type of "intellectual" that the eighteenth century in England has to offer us; but at the same time he is none the less human.

Goldsmith has more inspiring warmth, even if in his case the intellectuality is not of so exacting a nature. Still one should not undervalue his satirical remarks, or his reflections upon the society of his time. In very close touch as he is with French literature and thought, he is a "philosopher" after his fashion. With greater blandness and with his indulgent humour, he criticises manners and ideas in England, just as Voltaire and Rousseau did in France.[1] Occasionally he imitates Voltaire; he denounces the accusatory wrath of Rousseau, but yet is influenced by him. The ideal of simplicity in accordance with nature—a principle of good—which he suggests or which can be divined in the background of his work, is that of his temperament; in his applications of it, however, he owes something to the theses of Rousseau. The horizon of his mind is international; he likes to illustrate the diversity of opinions and fashions. In other respects, he is first and foremost himself. The moralist in him can temper a clever mockery with pleasing archness. The theorist of taste and letters

[1] For Goldsmith's debt to France, see the study by L. Sells, 1924.

shows at once a very exact sense of values, when distinguishing the artificial character of classicism in its decline; and a certain timidity, with regard to Shakespeare and the beauties of "Gothic" times. Goldsmith is essentially a man of his day; the literary transition, the change in the mood of minds, are taking place in him without his being fully aware of them.

The best feature of these small treatises is to be found in the personality which permeates them, and which is to be more clearly seen at times in the memories borrowed by Goldsmith from the years of his own past. As an essayist, he has much of the charm of Steele, with less youthfulness of heart, a riper reflection, and a touch of melancholy. In thus taking up once again the form created by the authors of the *Spectator,* he imparts to it a vitality that is new, and yet in many respects not unlike what it was before.

5. *The Ethics of Everyday Life; the Letter-Writers.*—The closer social relations which develop during the course of the eighteenth century among the governing classes—the aristocracy and the upper middle order—create a more active interchange of ideas, and a more frequent human intercourse. In England as in France, it is the age of the "salon." This is not to say that the differences between the two peoples do not come out in certain traits. The joy of conversation, in the case of the English, is less frank and free, less sought after for its own sake. Most often it is fused with another interest—worldly, political, or moral and religious. Though brilliant personalities, who combine feminine charm with vivacity of intellect, also form in England the centre of these voluntary associations, the latter have not played the same part, or exercised the same attraction as in France, whether because owing to the rival influence of other and less refined pleasures, such as gambling, the surroundings proved less favourable to them; or because the difficult reconciliation of good taste and the fullest spontaneity with the cult of intellectual things, was on the average less perfectly effected.

Social intercourse in the English upper classes, however, is at this date similar to what it is in France. The life of distinguished groups has a polite and independent moral tone. The diffuse rationalism which colours manners and thought is there prone to assume the aspect of light irony, of scepticism, and even cynicism. Far from the currents of Puritan austerity of sentiment which are slowly extending their influence from the mass of the middle

class to the whole body of society, the circles that are privileged by birth or fortune thus retain to the end of the century a mode of living in which one recognises the tradition of the Restoration, in an attenuated and more decorous form.[1]

This aspect of an age when classicism is becoming a spent power, whilst the moral forces which will replace it are steadily growing, is shown up particularly in the works of authors who take part in the life of the world, and who write for it, or whose only object is to recreate its atmosphere in their pages. Their inspiration shows, just as well as the isolated thought of a Hume, that the surviving reign of classicism in literature is founded upon the parallel continuance and authority of a frame of mind in intimate harmony with it.

The most famous series of letters of this period have a common character; they express in the field of familiar moralising, or of worldly intercourse, the spirit of a society eager for truth, greedy for pleasure, cosmopolitan in taste, secretly distrustful or hostile with regard to any enthusiasm or any rigorous discipline.

A thoroughly French figure in many respects, related to France by affinities and preferences, writing French as easily as English, Chesterfield[2] is well known in France; and the attitude of this educator towards the problems of conduct is too clearly defined not to have been been everywhere and at once understood. He eliminates everything that is purely a matter of conscientious scruples; and only appeals to sentiment in the least possible measure. Social success is the aim proposed in life; in order to attain it, the most fitting means are recommended with unabashed frankness, and in the light of the reflective experience of a man of the world. Politeness, accomplishments, the art of pleasing,

[1] The didactic treatise of John Brown (1715-66), *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (1757), according to which English society, for the moralist, had only surface defects, reveals the persistence of an easy, conventional optimism, in direct opposition to the Puritan view which considered England as [illegible]

[illegible] studied at Cam-
[illegible] of many public
[illegible] nd retired from
[illegible] illegitimate son,
[illegible] r even in Latin,
although not intended for publication, appeared after his death in 1774 (ed. by Strachey, 2 vols, 1901). Another series of letters addressed to his godson was only brought to light in 1890 (*Letters to His Godson*, ed by the Earl of Carnarvon). See Sainte-Beuve, *Lundis*, vol. ii.; Craig, *Life of Chesterfield*, 1907; R. Coxon, *Chesterfield and His Critics*, 1925.

the attractive qualities of personality and mind, have never been more happily defined. There is in these letters a shrewd sense of worldly life, and of the working of selfishness pitted against selfishness under the cloak of good manners. These pages containing a father's advice to his son, have the quality of a moral analysis that is truly classical, clear, without illusion, expressed in a language of perfect ease and naturalness. The cold, elegant cynicism which emanates from them has always repelled the tender and ardently religious soul. But it is easy to exaggerate the unmoral note in Chesterfield. Under the gloss of culture, his temperament preserves a texture that is rather English. The art of living he teaches is that of the century, accepted without revolt, and explained without any attempt at disguise; but the man in Chesterfield has sides to his character that are genuinely amiable, simple, and sincerely affectionate.

Horace Walpole[1] is an historian of the second order, a distinguished amateur, capable of critical initiative (in his *Historic Doubts*); and by a mere whim a novelist, whose paradoxical work we shall study elsewhere.[2] It is through his letters that his fame remains living to-day. They offer us the most complete, varied and animated picture of English life in the second half of the eighteenth century. Those he addresses to his friend, Sir Horace Mann, in residence at Florence, are a diary of and commentary upon the political and worldly affairs of his country. Without neglecting literature, he speaks more often of the arts, and

[1] Horatio, son of the Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole, born in 1717, studied at Eton and Cambridge, travelled on the Continent with his friend, the poet Gray, entered Parliament (1741), from which he retired in 1768. Long before this date, he devoted his attention to his residence at Strawberry Hill, building it in Gothic style, gathering in it a collection of works of art, establishing a printing press, etc.; during his frequent travels in France, he formed with Mme. du Deffand a friendship which, with Walpole, did not seem to have been a love-affair. Created Earl of Orford in 1791, he died in 1797, leaving behind an enormous correspondence, which was published in fragments from 1798 onwards (ed. by Paget Toynbee, 16 vols., 1903). See *Supplement to the Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. by Toynbee, 1919; *Selection of the Letters*, ed. by W. S. Lewis, 1927. His miscellaneous works (5 vols., 1798, and afterwards increased to 9 vols.) comprise historical writings (republished since that date) on the reigns of the Hanoverian sovereigns, and his *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard III.*, 1768; a novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, 1764; a tragedy, *The Mysterious Mother*, 1768; *Some Anecdotes of Painting in England*, 1762, etc.. His letters to Mme. du Deffand were destroyed, and we have only those which she addressed to him (ed. by P. Toynbee, 3 vols., 1912). See A. Dobson, *Horace Walpole*, 1910; Greenwood, *Horace Walpole's World*, 1913; Yvon, *Horace Walpole*, 1924; idem, *Horace Walpole as a Poet*, 1924; D. M. Stuart, *Horace Walpole* (English Men of Letters), 1927.

[2] See Book IV. chap. iii.

especially of the court, the town and Parliament. But nothing that takes place in Europe is indifferent to him; his travels take him to France and Italy; and by the breadth of his culture as of his interests, he eminently represents the cosmopolitanism of the higher social circles in this age.

The correspondence of Walpole is full of great talent: it is the work of a man of supple, varied interests, gifted for the fine and lively expression of ideas, and for that type of conversational writing which demands leisure, a rich experience, piquancy of mind, and a spirit of friendship. The pleasant vivacity of the form is sustained and directed by a discreet endeavour and an intentional aim. Walpole admired Madame de Sévigné too much not to wittingly try to imitate her. If he spoke French poorly, he knew French literature well, and while the influence of France upon his style may have been exaggerated, his letters, nevertheless, are polished by that international refinement of thought and language, in which the share of France is recognisable before all others. Less nimble, rapid and brilliant than Voltaire, he comes up close to him through his ease, his happy turn of phrasing and epigrammatic felicity. With his labour, he has an [illegible] simplicity, which at times even goes to the length of the [illegible] writing of the nobleman; he is never tedious, never pompous, and often displays an original happiness of expression.

The subject of greatest interest is the personality of [illegible] who, despite a certain reserve, reveals his whole self [illegible] respondence of sixty years. Here one comes upon a [illegible] inclining to cynicism, but at bottom courageous, [illegible] disillusioned scepticism, which has lost the very power [illegible] asm, though not that of curiosity, along with [illegible] general indulgent and amused, some hardness [illegible] of language at times mocking and unfeeling [illegible] hand a sincerity, a modesty as to the most [illegible] real faculty of affection, an aristocratic [illegible] of a life that was not altogether [illegible] towards Madame du Deffand—whom he [illegible] respect, esteem, and a little irony, [illegible] warmer attachment, still tempered by the [illegible] the feeling of the fragility of such a [illegible] not such, as far as one can ascertain [illegible] memory, even if it is not altogether to his [illegible]

Mrs. Montagu [1] is one of the queens of the Blue Stockings, as were termed at this date in England those ladies who were bold enough not to hide their wit and culture.[2] The energy and originality implied in such audaciousness would of course suggest to them a sometimes excessive reaction against the absolute effacement which use and opinion imposed upon women; and the term by which they are known reveals in others with regard to them a slightly irreverent feeling. But there is hardly any pedanticism in these wives and mothers of families, who are stricken with the love of literature and knowledge, no more than there is any real preciosity either; the faint traces of affectation are compensated for by a strong sense and by the unexceptionable seriousness of their mode of living. The doubtful reputation of a Mrs. Behn or a Mrs. Manley leaves a Mrs. Vesey, a Mrs. Delany, a Mrs. Boscawen perfectly immune; on the other hand, it is too evident that this English replica of the French "salons" owes to a rather different social and intellectual tone a less spontaneous charm, a less communicative grace.

Mrs. Montagu possesses, however, a very witty verve. Of a balanced, almost cold nature, she strikes rather than she attacks the reader by the quality of her gifts. Her very first letters already show an extraordinary vivacity and pungency; and to the end her writing retains its balance, its terseness, its ease of style. She cultivates her talent, and does not always avoid the error of abusing it; the virtue of a pleasing simplicity is not one of her merits; her correspondence, of unequal interest, now has lost its freshness of appeal. Yet it still contains valuable descriptions of manners, and the picture of an intelligent, brilliant, sensible woman, reasonable enough to temper her caustic exuberance with a wise and prudent art of living.

Despite the relative dryness of her moral temperament, Mrs.

[1] Elizabeth Robinson, daughter of a Yorkshire squire, born in 1720, after a brilliantly precocious youth married in 1742 Edward Montagu, of noble descent and great wealth, but devoid of talent. She formed the centre of an elegant and cultured society, and kept a salon in London until the last years of the century; she died in 1800. Her *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* (1769) was a reply to the criticisms of Voltaire. The first part of her correspondence was published in 4 volumes (1809-13); the second was utilised by J. Doran in his book, *A Lady of the Last Century* (1873); and by R. Blunt (*Mrs. Montagu, Her Letters and Friendships from 1762 to 1800*), 1923. See R. Huchon, *Mrs. Montagu and Her Friends*, 1907; E. R. Wheeler, *Famous Blue-Stockings*, 1910.

[2] For the probable origin of this phrase—at first applied to a man, and suggesting the unceremonious carelessness in dress of one whose sole concern was intellectual elegance, see *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. xi. chap. xv.

Montagu has a keen appreciation of the greatness of Shakespeare, even if she has no liking for his poetry; she defends the rights of his creative genius, and shows up the errors of Voltaire, with an entire freedom of judgment as to the dogmas of classicism. In the same way, Horace Walpole, more out of intellectual curiosity than from any sentimental contagion, takes his place one day among the creators of the pre-Romantic novel. Indeed from now onwards there are very few writers who do not more or less reveal the commingling of tendencies, and the close association of the new desires with traditional rationalism.

To be consulted: *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol x., chaps ix. xi. xii. xiv.; vol xi. chap. xv., Cru, *Diderot as a Disciple of English Thought*, 1913; Dobson, *Horace Walpole*, new edition, 1910; T H. Green, Introduction to Hume's [illegible] and ii. (*Works*, vol. i), 1885; Gosse, *History of* [illegible]; Huxley, *Hume* (English Men of Letters), [illegible]lish *Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 1902;

BOOK IV

THE PRE-ROMANTIC PERIOD (1770-1798)

CHAPTER I

THE AWAKENING OF IMAGINATION

1. *Psychological Sources, and the Trend of Ideas.*—The last thirty years of the eighteenth century can be considered as being in themselves, and without too artificial an arrangement of the facts, a separate period in the study of English Literature. They are naturally linked with those which have just preceded them; in the course of the long transition which is finally to lead to Romanticism, they form, as it were, a second stage, and thus a continuation of the first. At the same time they possess a quality of their own, because the signs which go to show that a moral and literary change is about to develop, that a new age is soon to announce itself, are ever-increasing and relatively more numerous. If the general trend of thought during these years is somewhat mixed, still one can see that the psychological elements whose growth is moulding the future are henceforth sufficiently powerful to assume a dominant part; they outnumber other elements whose influence lies in the opposite direction. Thus, if a definition be sought to characterise this period, it is best supplied by the age which follows, and towards which it obviously tends; it can be appropriately termed the "Pre-Romantic" period.

It owes its distinctive character, primarily, to the fact that the awakening of imagination reinforces and completes the renascence of feeling. From the one movement one passes naturally and easily to the other. In the normal course of things, the desire to feel will impart a certain stimulus to the faculty which evokes and combines various kinds of images, especially those images of an intense and rare nature. In the latter is to be found one of the most potent sources of emotion. Their suggestive quality is sought after not only for itself, but because it

rarely manifests its presence without, at the same time, sending an awakening thrill through all the fibres of our sensibility. The attractive charm of visions borrowed from the storied past, from distant climes, from all that is striking and odd, commingles with the actual satisfaction of feeling found in the familiar and full stirring of pathos; and so the mind glides from the second of these methods to the first by an inevitable and prompt working of the law that governs the renewal of its inner resources. The one cannot be fully exploited, nor indeed put to its best use, unless the other be called upon to intervene.

There is already evidence, during the preceding period, of the imaginative awakening about to take place in the world of letters; it is to be seen to a certain extent in the poetry and, in a lesser degree, in the novel of the time. After 1760 all such symptoms and signs of a change tend to group themselves into an imposing whole. The feeling for the past in all its diverse aspects, the thirst for the picturesque, the longing to probe the mysterious, in one word, the quest after a world of the senses that is removed from daily reality and the more impressive, all bring a larger scope and a greater wealth to the forces at the disposal of art, thus completing the means by which a transformation in literature can be effectively prepared.

Among all these new elements, the one which deserves most attention is, perhaps, the yearning for the past; it was the most widespread feeling besides being the most pliable; it could more or less penetrate and colour the others, giving its special character to any such association. Imagination in its conception of the ideal world seeks what is fundamentally opposed to present realities; it finds its perfect realm in the fond resurrection of what has once existed; grandeur and beauty harmonise with the special charm that clings like an aroma to the quality of what has been. The essential feature of pre-Romantic evocation lies in the backward direction of its glance.

Other paths might have been followed; and, in fact, at times we find the imaginative activity of pre-Romantic writers working in a present which the element of mystery has tended to enlarge, or which has been clothed in an atmosphere of poetry, being removed into space. But much more often it is the past that is conjured up in the mind, whether it be in itself an all-sufficing source of inspiration, or whether it claim in addition the

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Other paths might have been followed; and, in fact, at times we find the imaginative activity of pre-Romantic writers working in a present which the element of mystery has tended to enlarge, or which has been clothed in an atmosphere of poetry, being removed into space. But much more often it is the past that is conjured up in the mind, whether it be in itself an all-sufficing source of inspiration, or whether it claim in addition the

resources of the mysterious. The reason is that the easiest and surest means of satisfying the growing desire of the soul for a moral change of scene was to awaken the memories of a former civilisation that lay stored in the slumbering recesses of the mind, or hidden in the dust-covered books of time. It was more simple to recall this past, to infuse it, as it were, with vital interest, than to set about the planning and building of a wholly new civilisation.

But what chiefly matters is that in the need of the soul for moral alienation from the present, more was included than a mere craving for an artificial change in the pictorial setting of life. There was also a keen desire for spiritual relief, which thus links up the awakening of imagination with an earlier movement, the awakening of sentiment. The past is not only felt as a period apart; it stands in direct conflict with the present, acts as a reactionary force, symbolising the spirit of protest and revenge. It will have nothing whatever to do with the present in the very sense in which contemporary thought most clearly manifests itself. Now, the age is one of dry reasoning, when all the vitality of life seems to be on the ebb; so, the soul will turn towards the past, in order to find the contentment so necessary to the cravings of its emotional nature. And of all the varied periods which such a past has to offer, that which affords the greatest satisfaction will be the first to be explored.

It may thus be said that the renascence of imagination consisted above all in the literary and artistic discovery of the Middle Ages; these came to be revealed because of the interest people began to take in them, and this very interest was the expression of a deeper need of the sensibility. The visible relics of this great epoch, and the traces it had left in the collective memory of mankind, showed it to be an age of faith, of the picturesque, of simplicity and of strong appeal; no more was needed by an inner aspiration capable in itself of creating, still further of transforming, its own object. The relics of the past were examined and explained; the cult of memory became a hallowed art. The Middle Ages lived again as a period of faith, of picturesqueness, of simplicity, of pathos, of all that lacked in a century of rational lucidity, at the heart of which was growing the tedium, and even the disgust, of itself.

The passionate idealisation of the Middle Ages was, as

always, the work of a strong desire whose whole aim is vested in the quest for its own fulfilment. In this renascence any real historical intention, any scruple of truth or desire for preciseness, was of little or no account. The past was defined and pictured by mental faculties to which veracity of detail was irrelevant. The one main idea was that the past should differ from the present; and as the present was the very antithesis of the intense, exuberant and romantic civilisation of the English Renascence, it thus came about that no difference was made between the Renascence and the Middle Ages. The one epoch merged in the other, was evoked with it, and received the same attention.

If we search deeply enough in the history of these thirty years, we shall find that what really takes place is the reawakening of a former state of the national mind; and it is only because they are recognised as familiar things that bygone centuries, with their manners, their mental and moral rhythms, and their concrete forms, acquire any real value. The sympathy which is extended to things of the past is based upon the belief that once upon a time there actually existed the various modes of sensibility which are now being sought after, and that it is within the limits of reason that they can again assert themselves. It is a phase, one might say, in its own inner evolution, that the national spirit perceives and approves of in the imaginative return to the past. The Middle Ages are hailed as a reality, once alive, and whose revived existence is now to be mysteriously but closely interwoven with the life of the present. It is as if the consciousness of the period were stirred at the same time with the enchanting pleasure of an awakening, and the remorse of its own forgetfulness. The English soul now feels the regenerating vigour of a new vitality pervading it, and dimly realises that this is due in no small measure to the resurrection of its former self.

2. *Ossian and Ossianism.—This subjective notion of the* awakening of imagination explains the very mixed nature as well as the great inequality of the elements which are the formative forces in the new movement. One central demand, the origin of literary changes then under way, was satisfied by various stimulating influences, whether those of different epochs in the past, or of different provinces in the realm of imagery.

To say that influences such as these had never before been felt would be misleading. They had, at times, been active, but the moral atmosphere that was necessary to do them justice was not sufficiently prepared to co-operate in the development. The seventeenth century was not without some knowledge of the Middle Ages; as early as the opening years of the following century, there was an increasing response to their attraction. Dryden, Pope and Addison were sufficiently acquainted with Chaucer to imitate and even adapt his work—very superficially at times—while the simplicity of the popular ballad won their praise. It is not, however, until after 1750 that the common mind, from the effect of a deep and hidden growth, evinces a new and sympathetic interest, first of all in the intrinsic value of the old-time texts, and then in ancient monuments and the modes of life of long ago. The soul of the nation is now discovering that it is not altogether satisfied with its present state, that there is still something to be desired; and that, on the other hand, such a discovery implies a full consciousness of its modernity as compared with the past. Thus the idea of an inner change was slowly maturing, and such an idea brought with it a certain sense of regret.

One distinct feature can be noted in the early history of this movement, and one that easily precedes any other; namely, the part played by Scandinavian influence. Sir William Temple quotes an old Norwegian poem, adding several remarks by way of commentary; at Oxford the study of Gothic and Icelandic receives some attention; Percy translates five "pieces of Runic poetry" before publishing his *Reliques;* and Gray composes original odes, in which there is evidence of a powerful but tentative effort to seek in Northern mythology the same power of lyric inspiration that was ordinarily sought in that of the South.[1] But even in the work of these pioneers there is little else than a superficial tapping of the literary vein, the results of which are of secondary importance; the effect of Scandinavian poetry is neutralised by the stronger prestige of Celtic models, and this in a

[1] Sir W. Temple, *Essays of Heroic Virtue, of Poetry;* G. Hickes, *Linguarum Septentrionalium Thesaurus,* etc., *Oxford,* 1703-5; Th. Percy, *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry Translated from the Icelandic Language,* 1763; for the Scandinavian Odes of Gray, see above, Book III. chap. ii. sect. iv. For a comprehensive study of the subject, see Farley, *Scandinavian Influences on the English Romantic Movement,* 1903; Van Tieghem, *Le Préromantisme,* 1924.

form which had been rendered popular by the success of the Ossianic tales.

While the theme of these tales cannot be considered as in any sense mediæval, it becomes, nevertheless, by virtue of certain immediate affinities, part and parcel of the influence of the Middle Ages. The study of its success throws a very direct and valuable light upon the hidden origin of the revival of imagination, because its history is that of a forgery.

To say that there is a touch of sincerity in the forgery of Macpherson is permissible. As a writer, he has not the modern scruple of literary property; he has an aim in view, and this is in a large measure satisfied by the fragmentary odds and ends of Gaelic legends which he succeeds in collecting. Here, according to him, was to be found the justification of national sentiment, and of the aspiration to a kind of primitive heroism, to an imposing yet simple beauty enshrouded in the nebulous mystery of the North. And if, perchance, he does not find it, he is audacious enough to create it. It seems to him the most legitimate course to adopt in his part of interpreter, that he should collaborate with the texts, and even use his inventiveness in repairing the ravages of time. When reconstructing in all its entirety an incomplete image or, if need be, putting a polish to what an uninstructed taste has left undone, Macpherson is not a mystifier in the ordinary sense of the term. He is carried away by the religion of national beginnings; he obeys the impatience of his enthusiasm, and has also a very keen sense of the need of the hour, and of what makes for success.

Macpherson [1] is essentially a man of his time, stirred as are

[1] James Macpherson (1736-96), was a Highlander by birth and a school teacher and private tutor by profession His early poetry showed distinct classical tastes. Encouraged by Home and Blair, he adapted or *invented certain Fragments of Ancient Poetry* after the poems of Old Irish cycles which had found their way into Scotland since the eighth or ninth century either in manuscript form or by oral tradition These he declared to be "translated from the Gaelic" (1760). The success of the collection led him to explore the Highlands in search of other material, which, in turn, supplied him with *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem*, etc., 1761; *Temora*, 1763 These poems in prose had a great and lasting success, both in England and abroad, and gave rise to numerous direct imitations, among which those of John Smith (*Galic Antiquities*, 1780) rank beside the *Ossian* of Macpherson. The authenticity of the group of poems thus named, after their supposed author, was discussed since its appearance, but found many supporters among writers and thinkers of note. Macpherson's so-called sources in Gaelic were printed in 1807. He was also the author of several historical works; translated Homer into prose, etc. *The Works of Ossian*, 4th edition (final text), 1773; ed. W. Sharp, 1896 See Saunders, *Life and Letters of Macpherson*, 1894, Smart,

his contemporaries with a moral disquietude that is in search (some object of worship; and while this accounts for the succe: of the Ossianic tales, there is also another important elemer contributing to that success: the part played by the Classics whose prestige interweaves itself with the illusion which th whole work was to create. The epic of *Fingal*, according to th critic Blair, conforms to the canonic teaching of Aristotle. Scottish pride, forgetting the Irish origin of the legend, proudly manifested its joy that a Celtic Homer should have conferred such glory upon the very distant past of Caledonia. The *Iliad* as understood by the eighteenth-century reader supplied the model for *Fingal*—but only the model, and the little influence it did have upon the work of Macpherson will not explain the tremor of excitement which greeted for many a long day the reading of his cadenced prose, nor the fascination it held over the imagination of Europe. There emanated from the themes collected by Macpherson a veritable force, the effect of which he knew well how to multiply by means of his skilful art, together with the intuitional gift of a deep sense of poetic values.

It matters little if the figure of Ossian or the pictorial representation of his universe be a creation of the most fictitious fancy, if the tales are a strange blending of legendary lore and simple sentimental conviction. Thrown as they were, from 1760 onwards, into the midst of a seething Romanticism, they brought with them the powerful leaven of a visionary melancholy. The central motive of these poems is the pathetic sense of regret for what once has been; they pass in review the glorious imagery of bygone days; and they touch upon the sadness of modern imes. These sentiments are given dramatic form in a number f moving incidents, whose decorative setting is placed in a wild nd fascinating land of mists, of torrents and of rocks. To a pe of reader who by now was thoroughly bored with all the y precision of classicism, and who was keenly desirous of periencing the caressing sense of vague indefiniteness, the ssianic scene—the landscape of the Ossianic page, brought th it the softness of dark grey tones, a sublimity suggestive the infinite. Macpherson's art is an important contribution this quality of style so essentially romantic; he developed,

es Macpherson, 1905; Van Tieghem, *Ossian en France*, 1917; idem, *Le Préro-tisme*, 1924.

accentuated and introduced a greater tenderness into what was but summarily indicated in the bardic fragments. So that the "Celtic mood" is thus to a great extent the creation of modern sensibility, working on the simple suggestions offered by the ancient characteristics of the race.

Above all, Macpherson knew how to imbue his epic prose with the rhythm of song, to give it a cadenced flow that was at once expressive and stately, and which harmonised with the grandeur and emotion of the theme; to arrange his recitative into paragraphs which take the place of stanzas, and to construct each sentence according to a periodic measure of solemn meditative tone, which is none other than that of the English Bible itself. One cannot, therefore, say that the ear or the soul of his reading public was unprepared for such a music; there was a certain analogy that was dimly perceived, and proved so efficient that the epic which Macpherson declared to be primitive, and whose fragments he dated to the third century, acquired something of the majesty of the Scriptures.

The development of Ossianism in Europe was destined to become one of the channels through which English literature exercised a most important influence in the formation of the European Romantic movement. The exclamative measure peculiar to the rhythm of the Ossianic poems was to leave its mark upon the work of several generations.

3. *Percy and Chatterton.*—The *Reliques* of Percy[1] (1765) show the direct influence of the suggestive themes of older English poetry. The taste of the crowd had altered but little towards the "ballads" or poems of popular inspiration, with their touches of human appeal or of humour—for this reason, perhaps, that such verse had a strong and simple flow, while the refrains and emphatic repetitions gained an easy hold upon the memory. But with the civil wars a deteriorating effect was wrought upon this kind of poetry which, until then, had retained to a great extent its vital interest; the most ancient of the ballad themes, with their robust and naive simplicity, began to disappear save in the more remote country districts; the national

[1] Thomas Percy, born in 1729, showed an active imagination and enquiring mind in many w[illegible] poetry, and published in 1765 three volume[illegible] He took an active part in the literary lif[illegible] in 1811. *Reliques*, ed. Wheatley, 1891.

heritage was unknown in the circles of the learned or in fash
able society. Already, however, from the time of Addiso
that of Gray, there comes into existence a small élite wh
interest is awakened in the ancient forms of poetry; and a
publications of some of the old-time texts[1] begin to revive th

Percy is not uninfluenced by Macpherson; he claims that
"minstrels" of the English Middle Ages are the posterity of t
Celtic "bards." From Addison, too, he derives some enco
agement: *Chevy Chase*, a sensational discovery of the *Spectat*
is given a prominent place in the *Reliques*. Like Macpherso
though more sparingly, he takes liberties with the texts. H
collection is a medley where the old jostles the new; the languag
of the ballads is most often modernised, and whole stanza
are thrown in with a view to bridge over the abrupt transition
in the narrative. Whilst Percy has a feeling as well as a respec
for the touching, naïve pathos of these early themes, he does not
dare to accept the bold directness of the popular taste; he must
needs bring it somehow under the principles of classical art:
Homer's precedent is called upon to justify it.

Percy's collection is thus far from representing either perfec-
tion in the matter of choice, or exactitude in reproduction. But
such discrepancies count for little in this revival of romance,
which is not concerned with scientific scruples, in fact is opposed
to them. It is only on the surface that this revival arises from
certain well-defined suggestions; these, after all, are mere pre-
texts, the means rather than causes; and the more these means
are pliable and amenable to influences, the more easily the move-
nent spreads its activities. The liberties which Percy took with
is texts have been to the advantage of his initiative. For
he first time, the essential features of popular poetry of ancient
ays were brought to the notice of the educated reader. The
stinct that had been blindly groping after regeneration in lit-
ature was now able to find what it was seeking in these pages;
d such, in the long run, proved to be the case. They brought
salutary feeling of rejuvenation to the sensibility of a public
own tired of all the false nobility of diction and intensity of
guage. Here was to be found a spontaneity replete with

[1] Several collections of unequal merit and varied contents were published in
land by Watson and Ramsay; in England by d'Urfey (1723) and Capell
o); a collection of *Old Ballads* appeared in 1723; the *Muses' Library* (1737)
an anthology of English poetry to the seventeenth century.

energy. An archaic note, the more acceptable for being sober, and a simple style of expression, pointed the way to a renovation of literary taste. The resulting effect was as deep as it was lasting. For a whole age the strong rhythmic flow of the ballad form, together with the arresting appeal of the repeated phrases, was to exert an obscure influence over the literary instincts of the English people; and with the advent of Romanticism we shall find this influence rising to the surface, assimilated and transformed, but still recognisable, and permeating literature in many and diverse ways.

In the case of Chatterton [1] we have an example rather than an instrument of the growing hold of imagination over the intellectual life of the time, as of the fascination of mediævalism over imagination itself. If he has deceived many of his readers, his archaisms, as laboured as they are naive, did not succeed in finding acceptance with the more enlightened among his contemporaries. The century which followed saw through his deceptive trickery, and unravelled all the means he used to gain his end. When all is said, his psychological case remains very significant. In certain respects he is the most romantic man of his age; his childhood is one long series of obsessing dreams, which unbalance any developing sense he may have possessed of reality; he yields to the allurement of this visionary existence, half believing in it, and so loses all sense of the value of truth. The ancient cathedral of Bristol, in the precincts of which he was brought up, instilled within him a longing for the Gothic past; he grew to love it in all its aspects, just as if it were some living being. But his hallucination was soon to lose its sincerity; it became more and more feigned, until it ended in the artful conscious practice of open fraud.

While his work contains little else than the promise of something better—an interesting study of its kind—it nevertheless reveals a temperament which in its elegiac mood, its touch of irony, its innate boldness of spirit, shows a mind in revolt from

[1] Thomas Chatterton, born at Bristol in 1752, was bound to an attorney. The Middle Ages began to fascinate him at an early date; he wrote modern poems, and imitations in the old style, which he attributed to an imaginary author of the fifteenth century, Rowley. He tried to gain the patronage of Walpole and failed; then endeavoured to eke out an existence in London by his pen; and all resources failing him, poisoned himself in his eighteenth year (1770). *Poetical Works*, ed. Roberts, 1906; *Rowley Poems*, ed. Hare, 1911. See the studies by Richter (Vienna, 1900); Russell, 1909; Ingram (*The True Chatterton*), 1910.

its time. The modern poems of Chatterton have a sweetness of expression, an atmosphere of feeling and an easy musical flow, but they lack originality. His pastiches of ancient poetry, with their composite language, their uncertain spelling, leave upon one an impression of strangeness, not unmixed with charm; and in several among them he has happily succeeded. It is the age of the Elizabethan Renascence, rather than that of Chaucer or that of Skelton, which is here recalled, and with greater skill. Again, Chatterton in his imitations of Spenserian verse displays the gift of a fine perception of metrical values.

In his epoch he was little else than a flitting apparition, a pathetic figure, a tentative personality. He invented nothing, but he contributed in restoring to a place of honour a tradition that stretched back beyond the years of classicism. With the Romantic writers, especially in France, he was to be hailed as the symbol of poetic destiny, in its unequal struggle with opposing reality.

4. *The Historians and Critics.*—The revival of romance, however, was also aided in another direction by a more exact knowledge of the past, and here the poets are replaced by the historians and critics. But this is not a question of dry history or rational criticism.

The school of Hume and Robertson, like that of Johnson, had evinced no sympathy with the Middle Ages, and at times had even shown an ill-disguised disdain for them. On the contrary, with such men as yielded willingly to the spirit of enthusiasm and sympathy, the Dark Ages which stretched back beyond the glory of the Renascence years and the reign of an ornate, well-balanced classicism were again infused with life; they were regarded with veneration, and it was acknowledged that they had a distinct and attractive charm.

Richard Hurd [1] is by no means a revolutionary; his opinion and conscious doctrine differ in no way from those of an orthodox classicist. But in matters pertaining to literature he allows himself the freedom of feeling. His intuition has led him unwittingly to accept principles which in themselves are subversive, and he enunciates them without recognising their true nature.

[1] 1720-1808. Appointed Bishop of Worcester; *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, 1762; ed. Morley, 1911.

He deprecates the idea of having only one model upon which to base good taste; he accepts an independent order of "Gothic" beauty, which the progress of enlightenment may have outgrown, but whose legitimacy has never been destroyed. He thus takes up arms in behalf of originality and character as values in themselves; he is led to recognise the claims of the supernatural, as well as those of a belief in things unseen that escape the sway of reason.

The Warton family [1] is associated with the literary revival of respect for the past in national tradition; from the father to the sons is transmitted the love of feudal architecture, as well as of a literature in which a vague mediævalism assumes a definite shape by being identified with Milton and Spenser. The *Essay on Pope* of Joseph Warton has all the ambition and ardour of a manifesto. In it he attacks the accepted view of the superiority of the rational poet, and lays down as a principle the sovereign rights of creative imagination.

For the theory of the importance of imagination, as a legitimate and fundamental part of all art, is now being gradually recognised, even while imagination itself is reviving as a living force. The æsthetics of the eighteenth century are setting towards the Romantic ideal long before the new poetry has finally defeated the old. The question raised in the quarrels between the Ancients and the Moderns had been solved, to all intents and purposes, by the victory of the former; but the modern idea persisted in a latent state; it grew active again just before the close of the classical era. In opposition to the accepted doctrine of direct imitation in art, it upheld the rights of originality, putting forward the claims of genius, that is to say, maintaining that the artist should be free to imagine and to create in absolute independence. Three years before the publication of the *Essay on Pope*, Hogarth the painter expressed a

[1] The father, Thomas Warton, was Professor of Poetry at Oxford during the earlier years of the century, and contributed in restoring Milton to a place of honour in English literature. His elder son, Joseph (1722-1800), published odes (1746), edited the works of Pope (1797), after having already contributed an *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, 2 vols., 1756-82. The younger son, Thomas (1728-90), was also a poet (see above, Book III. chap. ii. sect. iii), and the author of *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser*, 1754, and *The History of English Poetry from the Close of the Eleventh to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century*, 1774-81 (ed. Hazlitt, 1871). See Dennis, *The Wartons*, 1876 (Studies in English Literature); C. Rinaker, *Thomas Warton*, 1916; Van Tieghem, *La Notion de vraie poésie*, dans *Le Preromantisme*, 1924.

similar idea in connection with pictorial art;[1] and three y
after the *Essay* had appeared, the poet Young, who from
youth had sought to dissociate himself from the vain crow
servile imitators, published his *Conjectures on Original C
position*,[2] in which he defined the coming effort of the Roma
movement towards complete emancipation.

The *History of English Poetry* which Thomas Warton
is a work of singular conception. Planned on too large a sca
it tends to be diffuse, and is unfinished, while its wealth of eru
tion, remarkable certainly for the epoch, is seriously incomple
It owes its permanent value to the sincere respect it shows
those ages which were conveniently classed as barbarian, to t
clearly expressed notion of a continuous historical developme
and lastly to the author's intuitive sense of national origins, a
of the relationship which exists between the literature of a peop
and its entire civilisation.

To Tyrwhitt,[3] a contemporary of the Wartons, must b
accredited the honour of having revealed the real Chaucer of th
Canterbury Tales. He discovered the secret of his measure and
of the harmony of his verse, thus succeeding where Dryden had
failed. From now onwards the charm of a poetry of earlier
date than the Renaissance was brought within the reach of every
reader.

The revival of romance, however, was extending its field of activity in other directions. Curiosity had already been awakened with regard to the East and to those lands which lay beyond the seas, and this new interest was daily increasing; in fact, the eighteenth century is second only to the sixteenth as an epoch of exploration and fascinating tales of travel. In every clime the mysterious secret of the world was being penetrated, and yet there remained ample room for fresh discovery, so that the spirit of adventure and the intrepidity of the explorer lost nothing of their former glamour.[4]

[1] *The Analysis of Beauty, Written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste*, 1753.

[2] *Conjectures on Original Composition, in a Letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison*, 1759. See above, Book III. chap. ii. sect. iii.

[3] Thomas Tyrwhitt (1730-86); *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, to which is dded an Essay on His Language and Versification*, etc., 1775-78.

[4] The relations of Cook appeared from 1768 to 1784; those of James Bruce *Travels to Discover the Sources of the Nile*) in 1790; those of Hawkesworth in 773, etc. In 1774-78 was published *The World Displayed, a Curious Collection Voyages and Travels, with Introductions by Samuel Johnson*, 20 vols., etc.

Within geographical limits that were more familiar Johnson had visited the Hebrides; Gray the Lake District; Smollett and Sterne the lesser-known corners of France and Italy, while Fielding reached Portugal only to make it his grave. The lure of more remote and stranger lands had greater attraction for the men of letters. In *Rasselas* Johnson described an Abyssinia of his own invention; the *Vathek* of Beckford[1] in its turn interweaves picturesque descriptions with allegorical and moral allusions; but here the wealth of imagination revels in its own display, and this oriental tale, built up of the flimsy fabric of so delicate a dream, would be a lovely thing, if only its author had had to the end the courage of artistic freedom.

The feeling for nature, which has been growing stronger and stronger since the previous age, is closely connected with this renascence of imagination. The beauty of the countryside, still treated in a very general way, by writers whose emotional style is detrimental to careful delineation, is now tending to become the popular subject in literature. But after the nature painting in verse of Thomson and Gray there would have been little evidence of any real progress, had not Thomas Pennant[2] visited Scotland and Wales, and made careful note of his impressions; or Gilpin,[3] as the pioneer of a new art, drawn attention to the individual physiognomy of trees and plants, and to the infinite variety of aspects in the ever-changing scenes of wild nature. The spirit of keenness in the observation of the latter writer is a foretaste of the religion of Ruskin.

5. *The Rôle of Literary Deception.*—The "pleasures of imagination" as sung by Akenside[4] had been not so much the expression of real feeling, as the embodiment of certain abstract convictions, recorded in true classical style. Now, however, came the epoch when such "pleasures" represented the joys of actual experience, and could be indulged in by everyone.

[1] William Beckford (1760-1844) *The History of the Caliph Vathek*, etc., first written in French (1782); published in an English translation, revised by the author, in 1786; published in the original French text, Paris and Lausanne, 1787. Fonthill Abbey, a fancy Gothic edifice of great size, was built by him. See Melville, *Life and Letters of W. Beckford*, 1910, Beckford's Travel Diaries, ed by G. Chapman, 1928; M. May, *La Jeunesse de W Beckford et la genese de son Vathek*, 1928.

[2] 1726-98 · *Tour in Scotland*, 1771-75; *in Wales*, 1778-81.

[3] William Gilpin (1724-1804) · *Remarks on Forest Scenery and Other Woodland Views*, 1791, etc.

[4] See above, Book III, chap. i. sect vi

The growth of this new enjoyment sheds a flood of light on the self-sufficient power of imagination, and on its independence in regard to the logical working of intellect; little stress was laid upon the question as to whether the object of the impulse had any real value; on the contrary, the world of the past and the life in distant lands were better understood and appreciated, and had a greater charm of attraction, the more actual fact became interwoven with legendary lore. The various realms of fancy were conquered one after another by literary cheats, or the authors of devout well-meaning lies. Macpherson, Chatterton and Percy himself have shown how, through the spell wrought by a powerful inner feeling which pours its own wealth over distant objects, poetry does indeed reach a higher truth than history itself. And this is confirmed by one who in those days penetrated farthest afield into yet another province of the domain of imagination—the realm of mystery and fear. When Walpole penned his *Castle of Otranto* (1764), the first tale of terror, he wrote as a sceptic, and for readers who eagerly lent themselves to the deceit of his invention.[1]

To be consulted: Beers, *History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, 1899; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. x. chap. x.; Dennis, *The Wartons* (Studies in English Literature), 1876; O. Elton, *A Survey of English Literature*, 1780-1830, 2nd ed., 1920; Farley, *Scandinavian Influences on the English Romantic Movement*, 1903; Hustvedt, *Ballad Criticism in Scandinavia and Great Britain During the Eighteenth Century*, 1916; Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, 1762 (ed. Morley, 1911); E. W. Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England*, etc., 1925; M. May, *La Jeunesse de Beckford*, etc., 1928; Phelps, *The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement*, 1893; Van Tieghem, *Ossian en France*, 1917; idem, *Le Mouvement Romantique* (*Angleterre*, etc.), new ed., 1923; idem, *Le Préromantisme*, 1924; Theodore Watts-Dunton, *The Renascence of Wonder in Poetry* (*Chambers's Cyclopædia of English Literature*, vol. iii.), 1903.

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[1] See below, chap. iii.

CHAPTER II

THE RELIGIOUS AWAKENING

1. *The Direct or Distant Influence of Methodism.*—The rebirth of imagination is above all perceptible in general literature, in which it finds its most direct outlet of expression. At the same time, however, there develops another movement, no less profound, whose centre of action lies in the domain of religious beliefs. This awakening will also furnish one of the sources of the Romantic revival, but it will be a hidden source. In its early stages it concerns only a very limited set of university people; then its widening influence stretches farther afield to the masses, who are but distantly connected with culture; only later and by slow degrees does it work its way upward to the upper classes, and permeate them in their turn. Besides, without showing any animosity to art in general, as did Puritanism at an earlier date, it nevertheless favours a certain spiritual austerity, a rigorous code of morals, which, it must be admitted, are hardly compatible with the exercise of artistic pursuits. For diverse reasons such as these, the new creed had not an immediate nor a widespread effect upon literature.

It did, however, exercise an influence that was as great as it was productive. Methodism—that is to say, the original and principal form of this religious awakening—modified the general attitude of minds towards the problems and duties which life brings in its train. The outcome itself of certain unfathomable psychological needs and of a secret agitation in the national conscience, it came in its turn to react as a stimulating emotional force upon the sensibility of the people. Pre-Romanticism as it developed borrowed from it certain elements, without which the oncoming revolution in literature would never have approved itself to the most entrenched instincts of the English character. Before Wordsworth and Coleridge could have taken their bold initiative, and by degrees made their work acceptable, a more friendly spirit had to be shown in England towards the poetry

which appealed to the heart; the reading public had to acquire a more spontaneous facility for seeing and feeling according to the laws of mystical imagination; and there had to be a rekindling of thought, a regeneration of the whole inner soul. Romanticism, and the idealistic zeal which in part inspired it, owe something to the new exaltation in religious sentiment.

Apart from this general action, by far the more important, Methodism on the one hand, and the keener zeal which its presence aroused in the Anglican Church on the other, did exercise a well-defined influence on certain writers.

These, in this respect, can be conveniently studied together, since they form a group that found the real motive of their literary vocation in a faith whose impregnating force was the gospel of Methodism.

2. *Wesley.*—The founder of Methodism is too dominating a figure, and the written evidence of his apostolate of too great an interest, not to be given a place in the history of English literature.

John Wesley [1] is, first and foremost, an irradiating centre of mysticism. Thus the rebirth in matters religious during the eighteenth century springs from a regeneration of feeling, from a psychological impulse analogous to that which already is slowly awakening a new interest in nature, and in turn will revive art. The creed of the deists, the rational religion of the philosophers, the apologetics of Butler and the lukewarm orthodoxy of the multitude, all found themselves in conflict with a new tone of the national conscience, set not by intelligence or by a more developed sense of practical values, but traceable to the faculty of intuition.

[1] John Wesley, born in 1703, was a student and later lecturer in Oxford University; became the central figure in a group of young men whose rigorous piety earned for them the name of Methodists. He dated his conversion—the result of a mystical experience—from 1738; but already before that date he had entered upon a career which made him break away from the orthodox Church and caused him to become, against his will, the founder of a sect, itself divided between rival branches. His whole life was spent in travelling, preaching and writing; despite hardships and even dangers he carried on the work of evangelisation among the poorer classes in Great Britain and in the American colonies. He died in 1791. *Works*, 32 vols., 1771-74; *Journal*, ed. Curnock, 1909, etc.; abridged ed., 1902. *Letters*, etc. (a selection), ed. Eayrs, 1916. See Southey, *Life of Wesley*, 1820; Tyerman, *Life and Times of Wesley*, 1870-71; Winchester, *Life of Wesley*, 1906; A. Léger, *La Jeunesse de Wesley*, 1910; idem, *Wesley's Last Love*, 1910; M. Lelièvre, *John Wesley*, Paris, 1922; J. S. Simon, *J. Wesley*, 1928. For the Methodist movement: Julia Wedgwood, *John Wesley*, etc., 1870.

As usually happens in such a case, the odds are on the side of the belief whose vital force is greater; its prestige increases until the day when its virtual power becomes exhausted, and it is replaced by some other intuition. It cannot be said that there is any real originality in the belief upon which Methodism is founded—indeed, it is only part of a long tradition handed down through successive generations of Christian mystics. The immediate inspirers of Wesley are William Law[1] and the Holy Fathers of Moravia, with whom he is personally acquainted. But to this inspiration he brings the gift of an indefatigable strength of will, an unequalled power of realising what he sets out to perform, a suppleness of mind in constant touch with reality, and an ability to adapt everything to utilitarian standards —a feature no less pronounced than the uncompromisingness of his moral faith.

A man of action, a preacher, an organiser, Wesley was only indirectly a writer; he never desired, never cared to be one. His numerous works on the teaching of religion, the propagation of the gospel and the task of rendering it intelligible to the masses, have only a circumstantial value which has passed with its day. But the hymns he translated, and which are for the most part from the German, have the flow of fervent devotion, while his Diary, so full of the personality of the man himself, remains a document of indestructible significance. Its pages are the faithful record of the Methodist movement; its teaching is explained; the persecution it encountered, the progress it made, the broils it had with other religious denominations and political authorities, all are duly noted and commented upon; while an idea can also be gleaned of the constant effort that was necessary, the discipline and the gift of leadership that were required, to maintain the unity of a sect so great in number and dispersed over so wide an area. Here the history of society in the eighteenth century becomes pregnant with life, and certain of its most important phases, such as the growth of industrialism and the development of the artisan classes, are made clearer. But there is still more by way of revelation. All the psychology of a religious revival, the influences contributing to its preparation, the scenes of conversion, the contagious power of its influence over whole masses of the people, the spiritual anxiety and nervous

[1] See above, Book II. chap v. sect. ii.

unrest it gave rise to, the numerous individual backslidings, briefly the whole drama of the struggle between grace and human shortcomings, is here enacted before our eyes. And behind it all there is the commanding figure of Wesley himself, active, stimulating, resolutely bent on a gift and a sacrifice of self, through which there come out none the less the passionate energy of an apostle and the force of will of a prophet.

His style is forcible, clear, sober and devoid of all rhetorical embellishment, although there is perceptible a veiled trace of classical scholarship reminiscent of university teaching. It can be humorous, even ironical, as occasion demands, but on the whole it maintains a straightforwardness and simplicity of expression prompted by one desire: to record, in a spirit of sincere humility, the truth of a daily experience raised by the revelation of the Divine to an infinite worth.[1]

The social influence of Methodist ideas in England cannot be overestimated; in fact, it represents a kind of crusade among the lower classes, to whom it brings the benefit of a moral culture, at the same time that it pleads their cause by appealing to the sympathetic interests of all. In this, its action may therefore be compared with that of the Christian Socialist movement of the nineteenth century; by strengthening the sense of civic solidarity, by bringing the prestige of religious faith to bear in appeasing the smouldering discontent of a new working class, whom modern industry had brought into existence. Methodism has contributed in making the established order of things more fundamentally secure. To it in part is due the saving of England from the contagion of French revolutionary ideas.

3. *The Friends and Opponents of Methodism.*—The age which witnessed the rise and growth of the Methodist movement regarded itself as still a rational one; so that the quieter minds of the time (not to speak of the hostile attitude of the orthodox) would openly gibe at the zeal of these believers. During the last sixty years or so of the century, the controversy which Methodism aroused became an aspect of the broader his-

[1] Other apostles of Methodism must be briefly mentioned: Charles Wesley (1707-88), brother of John, whose many hymns are still sung, and who in several of them shows true poetic inspiration; George Whitefield (1714-70), the most moving of the orators, and a favourite disciple, until the day when his Calvinism brought him into strife with the master; John W. Fletcher, of Franco-Swiss origin, Augustus Toplady, etc.

tory of literature. It was considered good taste to rail against this new body of fanatics; and if we turn to the theatre or the novel, we find innumerable allusions of an aggressive or contemptuous character.

But the spirit of enthusiasm which animated the Methodist teaching, and which was very often justified by the sluggish attitude of the clergy themselves, was not without a certain contagious influence even on those who attacked the movement. The most noteworthy of the satires, that of Graves,[1] is much less virulent than it pretends to be; in the *Spiritual Quixote* we see the reaction of a moderate man, ineffusively sentimental, whose quiet moralising temper inveighs against the over-ardent spirit of a crusade that would seem, in certain ways, to outdistance his own religious conceptions. The bitter verve even of a Smollett is in its turn made more human by being brought into contact with Methodism, and his *Humphry Clinker* shows an involuntary respect for the humble convert to the new cause.

To pass from the negative to the positive influence of Methodist teaching is to recognise that the evidence, while less abundant, is of greater importance. With James Hervey,[2] or Collins, or Smart,[3] the spreading force of this religious awakening can be clearly appreciated. Young, the author of *Night Thoughts*, found himself in practical agreement more than in sympathy with the Wesleyans, who respected him despite the fact that he did not pay them homage. On the contrary, Brooke[4] agrees with their doctrines to the point of finding in them a main source of inspiration. As a writer he is mediocre;

[1] Richard Graves, 1715-1804, one of the central figures in the social and literary [illegible] "...erie," which counted among its members [illegible] ...d Jago (*see above, Book III. chap. iii.* [illegible] ...f which the chief was perhaps the love [illegible] ...nd of union. In 1772 he published the [illegible] *...e of Mr. Geoffrey Wildgoose* (new edit. [illegible] *, or Anecdotes of the Golden Vale*, etc.

[2] See above, Book III, chap. ii. sect. iii. At Oxford he was the disciple of Wesley; later he joined the ranks of Whitefield and the Calvinists, a step which incensed his master and called forth an attack; but the *Meditations Among the Tombs*, etc., are full of the fervour of Methodism.

[3] See above, Book III. chap. ii. sects. iii. and iv.

[4] Henry Brooke (1703-83): *The Fool of Quality, or the Adventures of Henry, Earl of Morland*, 1766-70; this novel, which Wesley abridged at a later date, combines the spirit of Rousseau's teaching with that of Methodism (ed. Baker, 1906). See above, Book III chap. i. sect. vi. The novel of John Moore, *Zeluco* (1786), with its philanthropical crusade against slavery, may be mentioned here as showing some affinities.

a lover both of realism and of mysticism, he is inclined to be too communicatively eloquent—a feature which tends to mar the novel where he gives a picture of the century as he saw it, and describes a virtuous soul as it ought to be. But there is in his pages a strange admixture of rugged strength and enthusiasm.

4. *Cowper.*—A great poet, though not one of the greatest, is indebted in no small way to the religious revival of the eighteenth century for part of the creative force of his inspiration, and thus can be legitimately connected with it.

Methodism, it must be remembered, is not the only form of this revival. In its turn it provokes in the ranks of the Anglican clergy a counter-movement as spiritually zealous in purpose as the other, and one which will continue to assert itself with the following century: evangelicalism. It is due to the direct influence of this second movement that William Cowper [1] is able to regain a certain sense of balance, despite the depression that weighs down upon his soul and alienates his reason; and to it also he owes the power of moral concentration which enables him to write. The work of Cowper is a foretaste of the coming renovation in literature. In some respects his poetry furnishes a rough outline of what we shall find in that of Wordsworth. At the core of his poetical creed there lies a faith, a healing principle, the fruit of painful experience. If he feels the craving for simplicity, and possesses the courage to be simple, such a gift arises from the feeling of kinship with man-

[1] William Cowper, born in 1731, the son of a country rector, was connected with one of the branches of the noble family of the Coopers. He studied at Westminster School and chose the law as his profession. The influences of a disappointed love and of a morbid timidity brought about an attack of madness, during which he attempted suicide; upon recovery, he took up his abode at Huntingdon in the home of his friends, the Unwins, who remained associated with him during his lifetime. He removed with them to Olney, where Newton, a curate, and one of the outstanding figures in the evangelical movement, exerted a deep influence over him. It was at his request that Cowper collaborated in a collection of religious poems, the *Olney Hymns*, 1779. He was still, however, an invalid, haunted by the thought of suicide. A series of eight satires (*Table Talk, The Progress of Error, Truth, Expostulation, Hope, Charity, Conversation, Retirement*), suggested to him by Mrs. Unwin, and several shorter pieces, composed the volume of *Poems* of 1782. Another friendship, that of Lady Austen, is the source of his principal work, *The Task* (1785). Among other poems one may mention *Tirocinium* and *John Gilpin*. He further translated Homer, Mme. Guyon, etc., into verse; and died in 1800. *Works*, ed. Southey, 1853-55; *Poetical Works*, ed. Benham, 1870; ed. Milford, 1911; *Correspondence*, ed. Wright, 1904; *Selected Letters*, ed. Lucas, 1911; ed. Frazer, 1912. See Sainte-Beuve, *Lundis*, vol. xi., 1868; Boucher, *W. Cowper*, 1874; Goldwin Smith, *Cowper*, 1880; S. A. Brooke, *Theology in the English Poets*, 1880. The autobiography of the Rev. J. Newton (*Out of the Depths*) was issued in a new edition by Hamilton in 1916.

kind which personal suffering has tended more and more to strengthen; it is also traceable to the attitude he adopts of strict renunciation towards all that is external and superfluous in life, an opinion based upon a mystic certitude, at least an intuitive one. And it was just a simplicity such as this, enriched and encouraged by the knowledge of its own moral and artistic worth, that was required at this epoch; through no other means could English poetry have freed itself from the obsessing influence of classical rhythms.

Although the points of inner resemblance are very close, and the two poets' strains at times strikingly similar, there is still a great gulf between Cowper and Wordsworth. By nature he is the weaker of the two, and so is more the victim of his moral disease, from which he never completely recovers. His thought lacks the initiative to rise to the heights of philosophic idealism, from which a clearer vision can solve problems of art more decisively. Above all, in his youth, when the soul is open to influence, there is no French Revolution as in the case of Wordsworth, to bring in its train the shock of great revelations. His life pursues its course, still moulded by the social and literary traditions of the eighteenth century; he feels their weight, seeks to liberate himself, and, in a certain measure, succeeds. But it is too late that he sees, as from afar, how one phase can replace another in the history of the world; and so he never desires to break off entirely with the past, never believes that such a thing is possible.

Such is the source of the mixed character of his poetry. His religious hymns have at times a fresh beauty of expression, a purity of thought that is truly inspired; but the lyric outburst of passionate zeal might have attained to greater heights; it is here controlled by a stern sense of piety, curbed by a measure regular to an excess, and made to conform to a tenor of imagery and style that is lacking in originality. Every page, every line breathes the effusion of a believing soul, and yet lacks the sustained effort that makes for sublimity in poetry.

In the poems of 1782 the trend of thought is obviously didactic. The various arguments of the thesis are worked out with explicit and laborious care; in fact, the classical ideal of a versified demonstration, a purely rational one, still lends its main

characteristic to this branch of his work. Whole stretches of the development are merely arid; the sombre colouring of theological thought, together with the insistent tone of the moralising, enhances our impression of prosaism.

But there is already a marked progress. While the language and rhythm may show no departure from conventional standards, the originality of the poet is everywhere in evidence. His convictions are of too strong a nature to be calmly expressed; the discussion is raised to a higher plane, and his verse soars with impassioned eloquence. The form itself becomes animated; it abandons all the niceties of convention, and aims more at acquiring a spontaneous vigour and a perfect frankness, which, it must be admitted, are often achieved. Some of these poems, as, for example, *Expostulation*, where the call of conscience is more immediately perceptible, are in almost every line of superior merit. No longer is the poet the slave of the antithetic couplet of Pope, but as a metrist he reminds us rather of Churchill and Dryden. He can now give expression to his innermost feelings; his tone is still moralising, but it is deeply loaded with emotion; and it is this assurance of absolute sincerity that lends to his verse a convincingly simple accent, in itself a precious contribution to literature.

The Task represents a further step towards independence, as the theme, an artificial one, readily lends itself to a fully fanciful development. There is again evidence of the desire to convince and instruct, but the poem is essentially the expression of a soul; and the free effusion of modern lyricism is the ideal that secretly attracts and guides it. The seasons and the aspects of an ever-changing nature furnish, as it were, the setting to this inner life. The art of Cowper may be less skilled, less polished and supple than that of Thomson, but it has something that is more robust; just as his sensibility which, at times, can be described as almost feminine, has here, however, the suggestion of greater strength. His verse possesses a felicity difficult to define; an individual charm, which emanates directly from the soul, and to which contribute the faculty of feeling and thinking with noble beautiful breadth, the gift of expressing thought with a delicacy at once original and picturesque, or, as the case may be, with a strength of concision and spirited forcefulness. Here he shows himself a master in the art of blank verse, with a very

accurate sense of the rhythmic flow best suited to this particular form of prosodic eloquence.

Among his numerous short poems there are several in which the spirit of ecstasy is equal to the highest Romanticism, and the emotion of serene wonder may be compared with Wordsworth's. But, generally speaking, the inspiration is sober and homely, with a flavour of malice, a petulant humorous gaiety, and at times a touch of the naive.

By the combination of all the elements which constitute his style, Cowper reminds us of the past, no less than he suggests the future. Steeped in the classics, he writes Latin verse, translates Homer and Horace. In his happier moments—not the most careful and painstaking, but those when his ardent inspiration acts as it were spontaneously, exalts and purifies both the emotion and the form—he creates a genuinely classical expression; his verse then has all the power and conciseness of simplicity, without the laboured artifice that is ever striving towards elegance. At the same time his imagination, through an instinctive craving for health, becomes most often sober and disciplined. And his realism in the calm and faithful portrayal of life shows the artist's power of quiet and clear attention.

But Cowper is not a poet whose sole aim is to reproduce the minute notings of his mind. His poetry breathes a sympathy which shows a long association with the world of reality, an intimate knowledge of its ways. It is a poetry of the home, set amid the peaceful surroundings of a green countryside, so typically English; its atmosphere is that of a national tradition revived and fully conscious of its worth. It extols religion, morality, the family, the fatherland, in the spirit of a middle class which no longer hesitates to assert its own preferences against those of aristocratic taste. The themes it treats of are still commonplaces, but they represent the elementary truths of the heart, rather than of intelligence. Its quiet effusion is full of a tender pity, whether it plead the cause of the prisoner, or the slave, or the dumb animal. Its trend is far from being revolutionary, even if it seeks to make sentiment a guiding rule in social intercourse. It virtually contains humanitarianism, and the radical application of Christian ideas to daily life. Its love for nature has not the ardour of passion, but a keen though subdued warmth, and feeds on the freshest perceptions.

All those elements will later be found in the making of Romanticism itself. And as Cowper shows us, moreover, a tremulous morbid anguish, a disquietude of soul in which there is something of the indefinable, a series of tragic religious visions against which reason cannot react, an attachment to the concrete world instinct with a desperate craving for balance and health; it is possible to place him, if his personality be viewed as a whole, among the immediate predecessors of the Lake poets.

His letters have a most attractive charm, a most real sincerity. They are devoid of the slightest affectation as of the faintest vanity. The man in Cowper is fully revealed; we see all the workings of his wavering heart, his great desire to pour forth his soul, the finesse of his judgment, his gift of gentle raillery, his ability to lose himself in daily life, with its reassuring regularity. Seldom has there been found so little egoism in an invalid; and the record of that existence, always overshadowed by the menace of Fate, works upon us the soothing spell which is the privilege of genuine innocence.

To be consulted: S. A. Brooke, *Theology in the English Poets*, 1880; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. x. chap. xv., vol. xi. chap. iv.; Hunt, *Religious Thought in England to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, 1873; Léger, *La Jeunesse de Wesley*, 1910; G. Lacey May, *Some Eighteenth Century Churchmen*, 1921; Overton, *English Church from the Accession of George I. to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, 1906; Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 1902; Swallow, *Methodism in the Light of the English Literature of the Last Century*, *Münchner Beiträge*, etc., Leipzig; Tyerman, *Life and Times of Wesley*, 1871; J. Wedgwood, *John Wesley*, 1870.

CHAPTER III

THE PRE-ROMANTIC NOVEL

1. *The Importance of the Novel of Terror.*—Long before the close of the eighteenth century, the various psychological elements which go to form Romanticism have already made their appearance in turn; but the general state of the social and literary life of the day is as yet unfavourable to any initiative likely to effect the decisive liberation of form.

It is chiefly in poetry that form is an indispensable factor; in prose it plays a part of less importance. Thus the novel, which tends to become the chief instrument of artistic expression in prose, allows all the latent possibilities of the coming Romantic revival to combine in a union so complete that it would be difficult not to recognise in it an immediate forerunner and a fully developed example of Romantic literature.

The novels of Mrs. Radcliffe represent from every point of view a kind of early Romanticism, inferior both in the moral substance and in the artistic value of the contents, but allied by virtue of certain deeper analogies to those early efforts in verse which revealed the original genius of Wordsworth and Coleridge. The reason is that it adds to the elements already in evidence a new resource of inspiration rich in powerful and subtle effects: the search for terror and, on a wider scale, the probing of the mysterious.[1] And here we have a case of natural sequence in moral evolution. A feeling of wonder mingled with terror provides a new thrill which, in reality, owes its origin to the cultivation of certain other emotions; the need for it is naturally *created by the merging of sentimentalism and fancy.* The basis for the novel of terror is a mood in which the power of imagining is brought to bear most closely on that of feeling, after the latter has been led by frequent exercise to crave for refined satisfactions.

[1] There was nothing absolutely new in this; it was already in evidence in the works of Young, Collins, Thomas Warton, and the writers of the "graveyard school" of poetry. See the *Ode to Fear* of Collins, etc

subtlety; there is no complication with the hero of Mackenzie; he becomes the easy defenceless victim of the paralysing emotion *which sensitiveness experiences* at every turn of life. For the world, as Rousseau made out, is here the triumph of a cruel corruption; and the soul that Nature has formed of necessity finds itself continually struggling and suffering. Thus the pessimism of the Romantics definitely shows itself to be the inevitable fruit of too keen a sensibility.

In other respects, it is to Richardson that Mackenzie owes most, although he never ceases to be the ardent admirer of Rousseau. A theme of social philanthropy—an appeal against slavery—adds more variety to the pathos of his *Julia de Roubigné*, which is, perhaps, altogether, his best work. But here again we have the skilful adaptation of another's ideas, without the least real originality. His sentimentalism is rather shallow, as his life proved it to be; and although much of his inner self is concerned in the voluntary experience of the exaltation of feeling, it is nevertheless obvious that such exaltation is affected and artificial. *The Man of Feeling* betrays a kind of secret hesitancy; it is at once the vehement apology of sensibility, and the denunciation, by an instinct that wants to free itself and live, of the deadly conflict waged with the very laws of existence, when once sensibility is given over to the freedom of its own impulses.

Mackenzie's work is chiefly interesting as a sign. With him, and considering only the more obvious trend of his novels, we find that the pleasure of feeling and suffering—and of dying through the delightful yet fatal excess of a pain which has in it the essence of nobility and happiness—is proclaimed as an end sufficient in itself. Thus sentimentalism, as a free and dominant psychological tendency, comes into still greater relief here than in the pages of Sterne; and the close association of grief and joy, which at times seem to blend into one indistinguishable feeling, is brought to such a degree, as to render not only possible but logical all the moral complexities, all the paradoxical perversions of the emotions, in which Romanticism will like to indulge.

The Castle of Otranto, by Horace Walpole,[1] is the clever achievement of an enquiring mind, which had enough intuition to

[1] 1764; ed. C. Spurgeon, 1923; see above, Book III. chap. vii. sect. v.

divine a widespread need of the public, but not enough genius—or might one say sincerity?—to create a viable illusion.

It is very difficult to-day to welcome the suggestion which this novel seeks to work out in a way as emphatic as it is broad. The success it enjoyed in its day goes to prove how ready lay a still untouched vein of feeling, and how willing the contemporar imagination was to meet the writer half-way. The poet Gray, whose taste was of the most delicate, shared this impression of vague terror and anxious suspense. He granted the book that half-belief which allows the feeling of the supernatural to be born and grow. But when the use of the supernatural is abused in order to bring about greater and still greater effects, the whole thing becomes absurd. In the reader of to-day the emotion either is never produced, or vanishes very quickly.

The setting chosen by Walpole for his novel is mediæval Italy; this points to a close connection between the psychological origins of the novel of terror, and those which prompted the evocation of a picturesque past. As is shown by the term "Gothi Novel," the strangeness and mystery of a distant age, itself a prey to superstition, and wonderfully fitted to re-create the atmosphere of emotional belief, served as a model and encouragement to an instinct in quest of new and more potent means of self-satisfaction. In a first preface, Walpole avoided any reference to the reality of his facts; but in a second he admitted his invention, and sought to justify it by rather far-fetched arguments.

Stripped of all its atmosphere of witchcraft, the novel to-day is lifeless. Walpole with his clear and rational outlook upon life is by no means a poet; and when he attempts to deal with the mysterious, not only are his methods awkward, but he defeats his own end by placing his mystery in the broad light of a full fact, instead of leaving it enshrouded in the dimness so strongly suggestive. To make matters worse, he proceeds to tack on to the principal action of the story a kind of intrigue conceived in the worst pseudo-classical taste. The sentiment of the whole book is cold and inefficient. But we must not forget that in itself that general effort to rouse a pleasing anguish i the reader was a happy one, and the novel of Walpole retain all the interest attached to the first work of a series. To it ca be traced all those stories whose main interest centres round t

mediæval castle, with its grimy walls and its disturbing atmosphere of uncanny illusion.

Clara Reeve[1] has admitted her indebtedness to the work of Walpole, but this does not keep her from criticising his novel with accuracy of judgment. Besides, she is more than a mere imitator. The novel of terror as we have it from her pen is coloured with a sentimentality more purely middle-class; it divests itself of the aristocratic and slightly free character that originally clung to it. Its general tone is more sincere because, following the model of Richardson, the emotional element has in it something of a moralising nature; it can henceforth strike root in great general needs of the soul, which conscience accepts, or regards as normal and necessary for its well-being. Then only does it take its legitimate place among the recognised literary kinds. Clara Reeve is more cautious in her use of the supernatural; she does not exclude it, but makes it more reconcilable with reason, and through that very means tends to spread it over the whole tenor of a plot, while the emotion itself assumes a more distinctly psychological character. As a work of art, *The Old English Baron* is decidedly mediocre; but it has this advantage over *The Castle of Otranto*, that it effectively prepares the literary public for the novels of Mrs Radcliffe, as well as for a type of feminine Romanticism which, since that date, has remained a distinct vein of English literature.[2]

3. *Mrs. Radcliffe.*—The spell of Romanticism in all its potency was first brought home to English readers by a writer of original gifts, whose name to-day, however, is as good as forgotten.[3]

[1] 1729-1807; *The Champion of Virtue, a Gothic Story*, 1777; the 2nd ed bore the title, *The Old English Baron*, and was reprinted frequently during the nineteenth century (Cassell's National Library, 1888). *The Progress of Romance*, 1785.

[2] An intermediary writer between Clara Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe would be Charlotte Smith (*Emmeline, or the Orphan of the Castle*, 1788; *Ethelinde, or the Recluse*, 1789, etc), whose effects of terror have a discreet and subtle quality. The *Vathek* of Beckford (see above, chap. i.) may be compared, in parts, with this kind of sensational writing.

[3] [illegible] 64, belonged to a middle-class family, married [illegible] ist Her novels include *The Castles of Athlin* [illegible] *Romance*, 1790, *The Romance of the Forest*, [illegible] 794; *The Italian*, 1797. An account of her [illegible] appeared in 1795. Her life was almost that [illegible] iving a novel, *Gaston de Blondeville*, which appeared in 1826. A collected edition of her poems (1815-16), was published in 1834. *Novels*, Ballantyne's Library, vol. x. (preface by Sir W Scott); *Udolpho* (Routledge), 1903; *The Italian* (idem), 1884. See G Meyer, *Les Romans de Mrs.*

The work of Mrs. Radcliffe owes its non-survival to internal failings: the diffuse length of her novels, the monotony of a style that is lavish in description and overloaded with detail, the air of timidity and convention in the characters, as well as in the philosophy of life. And more important still, the authoress is the victim of a decision which in the hands of a superior talent might have proved just and fertile, but which, imperfectly realised, only leads to disastrous results. Her reason and her conscience refuse to admit, save in one posthumous novel, the existence of the supernatural properly so called; and although in many of her pages she does create an impression of dread and mystery, she eventually reduces it, through a full explanation, to nothing more than an illusion.

This method is traceable perhaps, in some measure, to the general atmosphere of the closing years of the century, when people were yielding more and more to the influence of tender illusions, without actually abandoning the standards of reason. Yet the chief source is really to be found in a religious aversion towards any spell in which the influence of evil might lurk. Mrs. Radcliffe is a strict Protestant, who looks askance at what she deems to be part of Roman Catholic or popular superstition, even although she cannot resist its fascinating appeal.

To explain away the supernatural is an unpardonable error, if the feeling of dread which the artist wishes to evoke demands a belief in the supernatural. When once the reader has been undeceived, that is to say, enlightened, it is a more difficult and even impossible task to again create in the course of a novel, or series of novels, the atmosphere of illusion. And this is a danger which Mrs. Radcliffe fails to elude. With infinite trouble she labours to piece together the threads of dark intrigues, utilising the resources of underground passages, secret doors, rusty daggers, and ethereal music, but to us of to-day all these material factors, with their laborious fragility, are something more than merely unconvincing; they are a source of annoyance, and have a deadening effect upon the whole work.

Radcliffe (*Revue Germanique*, 1909); D. Scarborough, *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*, 1917; MacIntyre, *Ann Radcliffe in Relation to Her Time*, 1920; E. Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror*, 1921; A. A. S. Wieten, *Mrs. Radcliffe—Her Relation to Romanticism*, 1926.

But at the same time she had a vague intuitive sense of an art whose subtle spell is potent only when life, in all its actuality, merges into the uncertain regions of the ominous and the possible. Besides their artificial plots, her novels have an atmosphere, in which her gift for intense and delicate suggestion finds ample scope. As each story unfolds itself, there is the constant feeling that not only the scenic descriptions, but the general happenings, together with the indefinable sense of apprehension which the writer can so skilfully impart, all combine to suggest that our convictions are not rigidly limited by material existence, and that what has seemed hitherto to be definite is now a flowing, floating symbol of uncertainty. Such a feeling—which is really a great innovation in English literature—does not necessarily imply belief in the supernatural. The familiar aspect of things in general has now acquired a mysterious colouring, a vague sense of impending change which excites the nervous emotion of the reader; and this is the so-called "thrill" in the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe, which was the secret of her great success among her contemporaries. Even to-day its fascination has not entirely lost its magic power.

This emotion is not to be included in the category of ordinary fears, nor is it to be compared with the violent direct efforts of melodrama. It is restrained, and can boast even of a certain nobility. By virtue of all the suggestions which go to make it—the picturesqueness of setting, the moving nature of the action, the confused sense of an obscure spirituality in the intents of the material world to man himself—it is a product of a very complicated nature, into which enter, one might say, all the elements of Romanticism. It possesses a quality peculiar to itself of spreading its influence, of being contagious, of transforming anything which it touches or which lies in its immediate environment; it is therefore essentially poetic. The use which Wordsworth and Coleridge will make of the subtle associations which link up the realities of everyday existence with the highest emotions will not be found to owe much to the example set by Mrs. Radcliffe; but it will in the main generalise her principles, give them greater preciseness, and eke them out by a whole philosophy.

What renders this affinity more acceptable, and at the same

time more striking, is that with Mrs. Radcliffe the feeling for nature is so strong that her art of description becomes almost the cult of an ideal. Her verse is not devoid of talent, but her pictures in prose are remarkable for their variety, their wealth of colouring and their charm. The English novel has not till her time known anything quite equal to this talent. In most cases the writer has never set foot in the countries she describes —Central France, the Pyrenees, the Apennines, Venice, Southern Italy—but she gleans her inspiration from travel notes, re-creates, transposes or invents at will, with all the force and courage of a well-endowed imagination. The Lake poets will not surpass her in their feeling for or painting of the aspects of the English countryside; their love of nature will not be more passionate; and from the mountain heights, or the forests, in which she places the novel, which perhaps offers the most pleasant reading, because it was penned when discretion was still one of her gifts, there radiate a lasting freshness and sublimity over her imaginings, which in other respects have felt the power of time.

As a portrayer of character, Mrs. Radcliffe is weak in the art of infusing life into her personages, composed for the most part of innocent, sensitive young girls who are persecuted, or of aged servants, ruined noblemen, traitors and bandits. They are soon forgotten, with the exception of the Schedoni of *The Italian*, who stands out in bold relief. This character with one or two others has furnished Romanticism, as has been rightly pointed out, with the dominant traits of a general type of physiognomy that will scarcely be found to vary; one of its notable products is the Byronic hero. In this way it will be seen that Mrs. Radcliffe had an immediate influence upon the forces at work in the literature of the next generation. Her novels were widely read, and left an impression on many of the minds of her time. But the most fruitful result of her work is probably that by transforming the common idea of terror into something higher and nobler, by making it more acceptable to the feelings as well as to the moral scruples of all, she prepared the way for the teaching of Wordsworth, when he showed how a lesson could be reaped from a wonder that was all a mystic illusion.

4. *Lewis.*—The influence of Lewis,[1] whose talent is decidedly more sensational, appeared to be greater than Mrs. Radcliffe's in the eyes of their contemporaries; it is more on the surface, and therefore easy to estimate.

The Monk represents the work of a very young man: a fact obvious from the crude nature of the emotions he seeks to rouse, as well as from the *naïvety* of the artistic means he employs. Without the slightest restraint he proceeds to exploit the thrill of conscious and pleasing terror, compounding it with others of a kindred nature, such as that prompted by sensual desire or by the loathsome sight of some physical horror. So that the psychological development begun by Walpole, but of which the seeds are really to be found in the work of Richardson, here reaches its final stage of sheer unrelieved morbidity. The novel of Lewis enjoyed a success due to its fascinating power of striking a terror with which a secret feeling of repulsion was not unmixed; but very soon public taste turned away from so open a revelation of affinities about which consciousness preferred to remain in ignorance. Yet the Satanism of Lewis had now supplied the extreme stimulus which imaginations set loose longed after; from it were derived some of the essential elements of the darkest aspect of Romanticism; and thus its influence can be regarded in the light of a liberation.

With Lewis we leave behind the mood of middle-class sentimentalism, and come back to an artificial literature in the manner of Walpole. *The Monk* is destitute of all moral depth; its atmosphere is heavy and unreal; the characterisation is over-simplified, like that of the melodrama. Where Mrs. Radcliffe could often instil so subtle an effect into her suggestions of the supernatural, Lewis handles his subject-matter directly and roughly. The juvenile ardour which lies at the core of his work,

[1] Matthew Gregory Lewis, born in London, 1775, was the son of a highly placed official; studied at Oxford; travelled in Germany, where he was deeply influenced by the spirit of Romantic wonder. In his twentieth year, he wrote his first novel, *Ambrosio, or the Monk* (1795); owing to the scandal it created in public opinion, he was forced to revise it before it appeared in a 2nd ed. He exploited the same vein in other stories. *Tales of Terror*, 1799; *Tales of Wonder*, 1801; *Romantic Tales*, 1808. His theatrical works include *The Castle Spectre*, 1797; *The East Indian*, 1799; *Alphonso*, 1801, etc. *The Bravo of Venice* was a translation from the German, 1805. He met Scott, Southey, Shelley, Byron, and died in 1818, leaving in manuscript the *Journal of a West India Proprietor*, 1834. *The Monk*, ed. Baker, 1907. See *Life and Correspondence*, 1839.

and which, unaware of its own secret nature, so clumsily conceals itself in the guise of a superficial didactic intent, no longer provokes any sympathetic response in us. But if the book is hopelessly lacking in warmth, it still preserves some strength in the intensity of vision which the author devotes to the portrait of his hero. *The Monk* forced itself, as it were, upon its generation. Even Mrs. Radcliffe may have been indebted to it for the conception of her Schedoni; and the imitations of German "Ballads," written in a language often vulgar, but not destitute of a certain sense of dramatic effect and rhythm, supplied the earliest models in England of the poetry of terror.[1]

To be consulted: E. Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror*, 1921; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. x. chap. iii., vol. xi. chap. xiii.; M. Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century*, 1908; W. Dibelius, *Die englische Romanskunst*, 1910; O. Elton, *A Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830*, 1920; J. R. Foster, *The Abbé Prévost and the English Novel* (Public. of the Mod. Lang. Assoc. of America, June 1927); A. M. Killen, *Le Roman terrifiant ou Roman noir, etc., et son influence sur la Littérature française*, etc., 1915; C. F. MacIntyre, *Ann Radcliffe in Relation to Her Time*, 1920; E. Railo, *The Haunted Castle, a Study of the Elements of English Romanticism*, 1927; Raleigh, *The English Novel*, 1904; D. Scarborough, *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*, 1917; Yvon, *Horace Walpole*, 1924.

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[1] The vogue of the "novel of terror" continued after Lewis; see below, Book V. chap. ii. sect. 2.

CHAPTER IV

RATIONALISM

1. *The Persistence of Certain Rational Elements.*—A special study of philosophical thought during the last thirty years or so of the eighteenth century shows that thinkers, generally, have been *content to maintain the traditions handed down from the* preceding age.

It will be remembered also that these traditions were of an already complicated nature, and it is not to be wondered at if, while keeping their dominant characteristics, they tend more and more to change under the effect of the moral and social evolution in progress. The influence of a diffuse sentimentalism is now beginning to colour and penetrate the doctrines of the rationalists. There is no doubt that the psychological and philosophical views of Hartley, Priestley and Price are, on the whole, subservient to rational standards of thinking, which often lead to very daring conclusions; on the other hand, however, the Scotsmen, Reid and Dugald Stewart, represent quite a different type of thinker, and claim intuition and experience as their guides. In the same way, while theology, ethics, æsthetics, political economy, history itself, whether older or newer branches of knowledge, are instinct with an unreserved confidence in the power of reason, and while the moral sciences are being founded or developed on the basis of similar principles and methods with those of *the natural sciences, still the theorists, by continually referring* either to the concrete or to feeling, or by subjecting reason to the requirements of actual fact or practical issues, do not allow it to be forgotten that a transformation has begun in the national thought, which leads it back to the fuller cognisance of its own originality. Without denying the great part played by intellectualism—utilitarianism itself will prove to be a philosophy of the intellect—the English genius, at the same time as Romanticism is liberating its innermost and truest artistic instinct, more and

more exactly realises itself in an attitude of mind at once empirical and idealistic.

The paradox of the whole Romantic age is that the signs of that realisation should remain of rather secondary importance. There is thus evidence of a certain discord between abstract theories on the one hand, and those latent, concrete doctrines which are called literature and moral life, on the other. This estrangement, more apparent than real, can be explained; and indeed it tends to disappear in the light of those simple affinities which always exist in individual cases between art and thought.

The great utilitarian movement, which provides, as it were, so singular a background of clear and calculating intellectualism to the fervour of the English Romanticists, is connected with the social evolution; it voices certain of the strong desires of the middle classes. But these desires are neither those of the heart nor those of the conscience; they represent a clear sense of interest, the spirit which aims at material realisation; the taste for economic independence, all of which find strong encouragement in the spheres of industry and commerce; and these tendencies answer to one main aspect of the English bourgeoisie, to features which are already in evidence, but are intensified by the industrial revolution. Thus the psychological temperament of this class is being modified; and literature just as thought, which for the last hundred years had been especially its debtors for all that suggested practical sense, sentiment or morality, will now in turn, and as forcibly, receive from it suggestions of a dry egoistic individualism. But while these suggestions may often appear to play a dominant part, it will never be an absolutely exclusive one; nor will they destroy the effect, with the general mass of the nation, of an essential psychological duality; for with the middle years of the nineteenth century will come a revolt, when all that is instinctively opposed to them will openly defy their excessive authority.

2. *Philosophers, Theologians and Moralists.*—The desire for a rational explanation of the problems of mind produces some rather remarkable results in the work of Hartley, Priestley and Price.[1]

[1] David Hartley (1705-57); entered the Church, but later became a medical practitioner; *Observations on Man*, 1749. See Bower, *Hartley and James Mill* 1881.—Joseph Priestley (1723-1804), son of an artisan, was a Presbyterian minister then joined the Unitarians; for his radical opinions he was made a French citize

These writers have certain traits in common, although their ideas can be said to resemble one another only in a very general way; they show a kind of hard vigour in their earnest pursuit of truth, proceeding from a great strength of character, but allied to a sense of reality which often tends to limit in an arbitrary manner the range of their conceptions. If Hartley did not create the theory of the association of ideas, he certainly developed it, and in this way prepared the main theme of utilitarian psychology in the nineteenth century. At the same time, he opens the way to the psycho-physiological theories of consciousness, in that he traces the various faculties of perception and memory, and indeed every kind of mental activity, to what he terms the "vibrations" of the nerve centres. Thus the progress of his ideas leads him towards a pantheistic materialism; but he reacts against it, upholds the authority of Divine revelation, and works out a new theology. Priestley, on the other hand, is more rational on this point and puts aside the idea of belief in a soul, seeking rather to establish the correlation of mind and body: but while he adopts the theory of association, he rejects that of the nervous vibrations; and his social opinions, strongly based on the experimental idea of an interest that is common to society as a whole, and constitutes its exclusive end, anticipate the political empiricism of Bentham. Price, full of zeal for the rights of the citizen, and the apostle of American Independence as of the French Revolution, is essentially the type of the British "intellectual"; but he attacks the teaching of Locke and Hume by endowing the reason with the power of forming new ideas, and firmly maintains that the qualities of good and evil are intuitional perceptions of the understanding.

These authors are not writers in the strict interpretation of the term; their most original thoughts were accessible only to the initiated; so that the general public was concerned only with

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and a member of the Convention; in 1794 he emigrated to America, where he died. His discoveries in chemistry alone would suffice to make him famous. Besides numerous religious treatises, his writings include an *Essay on the First Principles of Government*, 1768; a *Disquisition Relating to Matter and Spirit*, 1777; and a reply to the *Reflections* of Burke on the French Revolution He also left autobiographical memoirs. *Works*, ed Rutt, 1831-2. See Thorpe, *Priestley*, 1906.—Richard Price, 1723-91, a Unitarian minister, published *A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals*, 1757; upheld the cause of the American colonies and of the French Revolution; see R. Thomas, *Richard Price*, etc., 1924.

their political or religious doctrines. The Scottish school of philosophers owed its relative popularity to the fact that its tendencies harmonised with the sentiments of the masses. Throughout the whole of this age, the penetrating scepticism of Hume is a constant menace to any affirmation put forward on behalf of the moral conscience, with the result that the unrest in the religious world calls forth a host of refutations and polemical pamphlets. The most convincing arguments on the conservative side were those of Campbell, Beattie, Oswald and Reid.[1] These writers, indeed, appealed to an instrument of knowledge which everyone claims to possess, namely, common sense.

In the case of Reid common sense is not synonymous with the superficial judgment of the man in the street, but represents, as it were, a fund of all the intuitional qualities inherent in the spirit and language of a reasoning humanity. To Hume's famous analysis, which destroyed the reality of the material world and dissolved it into a number of loose shifting illusions, Reid opposes a decided and bold negative. To him, the perception of what is external is really a direct apprehension, in which is expressed and revealed the unanalysable activity of the "I." This rehabilitation of the immediate mode of knowing prepared the way for the renascence of intuitive philosophy; in France, through Maine de Biran, Royer-Collard, Jouffroy and Cousin, it strengthened the current of spiritualism which finally led to the work of Renouvier and Bergson. In Scotland and in England, the great success of the eloquent professor, Dugald Stewart, upholds the prestige of an orthodox idealism against the defenders of a utilitarian rationalism. According to the Scottish theory, the simple "ideas" with which Locke and Hume tried in vain to reconstruct the world are little else than an arbitrary and artificial product of the intelligence, whereas the stuff of actual experience is at once organic and complex. It is a view

[1] For Campbell, see below, sect. 3.—For Beattie, see below, chap. vii.—James Oswald: *An Appeal to Common Sense in Behalf of Religion*, 1766-72.—Thomas Reid (1710-96), Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow: *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*, 1764; *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, 1785; *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*, 1788. *Works*, ed. Hamilton and Mansel, 1863. See Fraser, *Reid*, 1898.—Dugald Stewart (1753-1828), Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, the disciple and continuator of Reid: *The Philosophy of the Human Mind*, 1792-1827; *Philosophical Essays*, 1810; *The Active and Moral Powers of Man*, 1828. *Works*, ed. Hamilton, 1854-58.

which has been taken up again and developed by modern psychology.

The same tendencies are in evidence with the moralists and the theologians; all their research is dominated by a general spirit of strict reasoning, handed down from an age when a mathematical certainty was the haunting ideal of those who tried to reduce the soul to a system. Still, their argument is deflected in various ways—a fact of which they may or may not have been aware—by certain extraneous preoccupations of conduct, or by a sense of the requirements of the heart. Perhaps it is even the unestablished, absolute force of some mystical belief which, like a secret inner light, directs their efforts. Abraham Tucker [1] is a type of those thinkers, often met with in England, whose untrained faculties possess a natural vigour, though they are as incapable of methodical reasoning as of a systematic explanation of their ideas. He exemplifies in a very suggestive way the obscure conflict that is being waged in the spiritual mind of his epoch—the struggle between the need to understand and that which calls for a belief without definite proofs. Paley, in other respects, is no less significant a figure; he had a greater circle of readers, and thus materially influenced the religious beliefs not only of his own generation but of several, by bringing to the cult of religion a sense of certitude that was at once rational and unassailable. Paley's well-trained thinking achieves a logical order; his doctrine, however, lacks originality, for he reproduces that of Butler in a more superficial plane, by tracing the existence of God to the many signs of an organisation in the things around us; while his theory of virtue serves to emphasise and formulate the instinctive utilitarian tendencies of the average religious conscience.

And, as a matter of fact, during the whole of this period there is a general trend in questions of morality towards utilitarianism. Already before the close of the century, Bentham comes to the fore as the leader of a group of philosophers who will thoroughly develop the consequences of this cult of the useful; but in order to follow the progress of their doctrine we

[1] Abraham Tucker (1705-74), a country squire: *The Light of Nature Pursued*, 1765-74.—William Paley (1743-1805), the most popular of the English theologians in the early nineteenth century: *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, 1785; *Horæ Paulinæ*, 1790; *View of the Evidences of Christianity*, 1794; *Natural Theology*, 1804. *Works*, 1825

must turn to the years after 1800, that is to say, to the next era, to which this group really belongs.[1] The keen desire to get at the basic principles governing conduct is very much in evidence with the contemporaries of Hume. The great sceptic himself had admitted that the feeling of sympathy which he held to be a primordial fact of conscious experience, directly gave rise to approbation or blame for the actions of others, and that from such a germ all the duties of man could spring; while he further defined this feeling of fellowship as a natural effusion of the human soul, a kind of friendly benevolence free from any ulterior motive. Yet the exercise of such a feeling was accompanied by a certain amount of pleasure, and thus the doctrine of utilitarianism was never quite lost sight of. Adam Smith[2] frames a code of morals on the same principle. He denies the existence of a particular and mysterious "sense," which Shaftesbury and Hutcheson claimed to exist; sympathy, according to him, is the motive force of all ethical judgment; but in order to be efficacious, it requires to be enlightened and controlled, and so can no longer be distinguished from the reflective reaction of conscience. In this way it appeared that morality was essentially a fact of social import, the outcome of men's relations with one another. The economic laws governing such relations were later to become the study of Adam Smith, who in this new sphere of thought tended rather to stress the importance of what he deemed to be a necessary egoism.

3. *Æsthetics and Criticism.*—The mind of the eighteenth century, attracted by the idea of general laws, and no longer differentiating between spiritual matters and physical nature, tries to reduce Art not only to a system of rules but to what it believes are explanatory formulæ. After the effort of classicism, which evolved categories and precepts for beauty and taste, there opens a period of still greater ambition, when the science of æsthetics appears, and literary criticism becomes a philosophy.

This movement in thought is connected with the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, which had quieted down, so to speak, but did not wholly disappear with the age of Temple and Swift; in a more definite way, the origin of the new tendency

[1] See Book V. chap. iii.
[2] See below, sect. 3. *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1759.

was in the tentative efforts which were made after 1750 by the renascence of the national spirit to uphold the rights of originality as against the doctrine of mere imitation. The innovators are naturally desirous of justifying their doctrine; and even writers whose work to all intents and purposes is orthodox and traditional allow themselves to be influenced as far as seeking to destroy the basic principles of orthodoxy. One of the most remarkable aspects of the trend of ideas during the century is this critical liberty which defines and suggests beforehand all the bold departures of the Romantic spirit, just as the progress of sentiment and imagination brings out all the mental elements of Romanticism; while the literature, as if bewitched, remains passively submissive to established forms of verbal expression, and lacks the courage to develop its own freedom. The theory of Beauty in art, as in literature, frees itself from the dogma of Classicism long before the actual appearance of the works in which this independence is definitively illustrated.

As early as 1753, the painter Hogarth [1] champions the cause of the sinuous line as against the straight, denies that any good can come from pure imitation in art, and thus instils a new life into the classical principle of fidelity to nature, by extending its scope to that of an original endeavour. Joseph Warton's *Essay on Pope* and Young's *Conjectures* [2] in their turn define the qualities of creative genius, uphold the rights of individuality, and place it above the mere observance of rules.

The *Inquiry* of Burke [3] at the same time voices the need for analysis, then gives vent to the urgent desire among intellectuals for a well-defined systematisation in æsthetic matters, and lastly illustrates the dominant tendencies which are directing thought, quite unconsciously, towards the theory of liberty in art. Burke protests against the old-time custom of looking for the rules of the Beautiful in works that have realised it; only Nature is the source from which fresh beauty can spring. Moreover, when he closely connects the sublime with terror, and shows the influence of the unseen and the mysterious in the production of fear, he outlines, as it were, beforehand the range and scope of the

[1] *The Analysis of Beauty, written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste.*
[2] 1756 and 1759; see above, Book IV. chap. i. sect. 4.
[3] *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1756.

novel of terror. He dimly foresees that emotion can be explained by a physiological theory, and the light he throws upon the relation of the human organism to the impression of beauty explains and justifies the rôle that Romanticism will soon give to the strong stimulation of the senses, and to suggestion as a general force in art. He himself indicates very precisely the way in which poetry influences the sensibility of a reader; it is a contagious action, in which the value of words is measured by their own tonality, and by the emotional energy which they have received from the impassioned soul of the poet. The suggestive force of words lies in their power of radiating an appeal to the senses and to imagination, and not in their quality of mere intellectual symbols. It is on this very principle that Wordsworth will build up his theory of poetic diction.

Several years later, Lord Kames[1] abandons the notion that literary criticism is founded upon authority, and maintains that rules are derived from the inner laws governing human nature. He also directs æsthetic thought in England, right from its beginnings, towards the sphere of psychology and even of physiology. But in order to fully appreciate the progress accomplished since the age of Pope—a progress which has been steadily taking place, and which at the same time has never severed its allegiance to the past—we must turn to the work of Blair,[2] whose *Belles-Lettres* form the taste of a whole generation. This critic has still a little of the narrow-mindedness of his time, as can be seen from his somewhat formal ideas on rhetoric and on a correct style; but his pages reveal a secret sympathy with the sentimental moralising atmosphere around him; a dim sense of intuition seems to give breadth and freshness to his perceptive faculties, as well as to his maxims. All his conscious effort is directed against artifice, and towards what is to him simplicity. Although reason is still indispensable with Blair, it performs only a secondary part; all artistic effects are derived from imagination and feeling. Sublimity resides in the essence of vigorous conciseness; it submits with difficulty to terminal rhymes, but finds its full expression in the liberty of blank verse. It has its being in the thought, not in the words, so that every writer who

[1] *The Elements of Criticism*, 1762, by Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696-1782).
[2] *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres* (1783), by Hugh Blair, Professor of Literature in the University of Edinburgh (1718-1800).

attempts to reach the sublime by mere intensity of expression is in error. Prosody is not necessary to the poet; there are forms of prose more genuinely poetical than verse itself, as, for example, that of Ossian; poetry is, above all, the language of passion, of imaginative ardour, whether it be expressed in lines of regular rhythmic flow, or otherwise.

The painter Reynolds,[1] however, with elegance and not without intellectual force, enunciated the laws of the beautiful from the point of view of plastic art. His doctrine has all the rigour of a severe classicism. It affirms the existence of a system of laws, outside of which the artist can create nothing that is lasting; it preaches the necessity for strenuous effort and fidelity to the object itself. But if the respect for nature is the first care of the artist, then his active mind will build up from actual forms an abstract idea of the ideal in beauty, and this, in turn, will guide him in his search after the sublime. Compared with this great art, the realism of Hogarth, Teniers, Watteau and Claude le Lorrain is on an inferior level. The value of a work is measured by the corresponding worth of the mental energy which has gone to produce it, or which it has called into play. A painter of noble ambition shall seek his subjects in history or in fable; he shall choose them for their human and universal interest. He shall always be an imitator; genius itself is the offspring of imitation. Drawing is the language proper to painting; the colour must remain before all simple and sober; it shall be subservient to the idea. The truthfulness shown in local or particular delineation shall be sacrificed in favour of the general element, of that unchanging, everlasting quality which belongs exclusively to reason. It is therefore evident that the doctrine of Reynolds is, and chiefly aims at being, classical. At the same time, in practice his brush reveals an indebtedness to the colourists of the Venetian School, and the happy originality of his artistic temperament.

4. *Political Economy: Adam Smith.*—The beginnings[2] of Political Economy in England can be traced farther back than the works of Adam Smith. At the same time it must not be forgotten that he was in touch with the French School of Physio-

[1] Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92), *Fifteen Discourses delivered in the Royal Academy*, 1769-90; ed. Gosse, 1884.

[2] In the works of Hobbes, Locke, Mandeville, Joshua Child, William Petty, Hume and Sir James Stewart.

crats, who contributed in moulding his thought. But even after the lapse of a century and a half, he is still, by the most solid of claims, the first master of this science, which in its modern and liberal form has exercised an acknowledged influence over minds and actions alike.[1]

With Adam Smith economy already represents a developed system; he makes a comprehensive survey of a vast field, marking it out into separate parts, and laying down the great lines of research which so many others have followed in his train. His thought has an inner coherence, which enables him to organise with vigour all the vast store of ideas at his command. But his doctrine has not as yet acquired the excessively deductive, inflexible and almost geometrical form which certain of his disciples will later give it. A gifted master in the realms of abstract thought, he never loses touch, however, with reality, and if at times he fails to appreciate all the aspects of certain facts, his powers of perception are none the less subtle and delicately tempered. His intellectual horizon is that of a very careful observer, who not only is able to penetrate the elementary psychological motives governing men, but can also appreciate the force of the relations between social factors which underlie every possible equilibrium.

Without analysing too carefully the inherent prejudices of the new bourgeoisie, Adam Smith finds himself agreeing with their various needs and preferences; indeed, to such an extent that he becomes the apostle of their individualism. But, although he may be said to voice in his work the instincts of a class, he nevertheless preserves the relative freedom of a broad mind, as well as a nobility of character. The agricultural type of country gentleman attracts him to the same degree as the class whose sole concern is commerce and industry; in the latter he discovers a trend, in some respects, opposed to national interests. He demonstrates the fruitfulness of egoism, but in a way that evi-

[1] Adam Smith, born at Kirkcaldy in 1723, of middle-class family; studied at Oxford; renounced a church career for that of literature; Professor of Logic, then of Moral Philosophy, in the University of Glasgow, he published his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1759; travelled on the Continent, and in Paris came into contact with Quesnay, Turgot and Necker. He wrote, in studious seclusion, his *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1776; was given a lucrative post in Edinburgh, and died in 1790, leaving in manuscript form his *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, 1795. *Wealth of Nations*, ed. MacCulloch, 1828; ed. Cannan, 1904. See John Rae, *Life of Adam Smith*, 1895; Hirst, *Adam Smith* (English Men of Letters), 1904; Haldane, *Adam Smith* (Great Writers), 1887.

dences a cordiality of spirit, a gentleness of feeling and an optimistic sensibility, which recall the temper so characteristic of the closing years of the eighteenth century. Upon the subjects of social evil and poverty he touches all too briefly, and in a way that suggests more an intellectual notion than a concrete sense. Similarly, he accepts too easily the inevitable working of economic laws, and these are the only points where is yet revealed a tendency to hard dogmatic assertion, which will rob the new science of part of its truth, as well as limit the human possibilities of its influence.

The substance of the work is concrete, made up of shrewd and exact analyses. Notions and formulæ which answer to typical cases, and whose scope is only absolute in theory, while in reality they do not hold good outside certain historical complexes, are grasped, disentangled with an unpretentious but sure method. Value, according to the writer, is based on labour; and the division of labour multiplies its productive force; the various classes—landowners, capitalists, manual workers—harmonise their activities in the productive cycle, and severally receive the rewards accruing to each from the pursuit of their interests in a spirit of enlightened selfishness; the welfare of the community springs harmoniously, providentially one might say, from the egoism of the individual. Now the progress of wealth in society at large means a change from an agricultural age to a commercial era; and this, in turn, introduces the legitimate demand for a complete independence. The State, deriving its powers from the delegation of individuals, and finding in taxes the sanction of its rights, is no longer performing its duties when once it claims to direct or even supervise the natural interplay of the forces and desires in conflict. The prosperity of Europe is bound up with an economic emancipation which will destroy all that remains of a tyrannical system of rules, or all that might threaten to renew it. The orthodox teaching of Ricardo on the one hand, the socialism of Marx on the other, are latent within that doctrine, uniting as it does with its optimism what might be termed the fatalism of liberty.

Adam Smith is a cultivated writer, attentive to form, and animated by an artistic sense of order and elegance. However dull or dry the subject may be, he has been able to make it both living and perspicuous, because he is possessed of a clearness of

mental vision, and can infuse a quickening force into all he touches. The tenor of his style is made of ample though not excessively long sentences, connecting the qualifications and illustrations directly with the main idea. The general flow of his prose is simple, natural and easy.[1]

5. *The Historians: Gibbon.*—While history, as a distinct literary kind, began in England only during the eighteenth century, its progress, once started, was very rapid. The same generation which witnessed the efforts of Hume and Robertson now sees them continued and surpassed by Gibbon.[2]

His work has better stood the test of time. It represents an immensity of task and an erudition that are admirable, a critical sense of values sane and naturally delicate. Gibbon is a seeker after truth, a writer who never forgets the complex nature of his quest, who is careful over the precise shade of meaning he wishes to convey, and whose every affirmation is coloured with prudence. He has exhausted every source of information then known, whether ancient or modern. And even if a broader and deeper science has since renovated the matter of his pages, transforming many of his perspectives and correcting occasional errors, yet the main lines of his pictures are still acceptable; and the spirit of conscientiousness which he brought to his task keeps

[1] Arthur Young (1741-1820), the author of numerous treatises on English agriculture, is chiefly known for his works on economy, and the accounts of his travels and researches; *Political Arithmetic*, 1774; *Tour in Ireland*, 1780; *Travels in France*, 1792.

[2] Edward Gibbon, born in 1737, came of an upper middle-class family; he was for some time at Oxford, but owed his precocious erudition to a zealous love of study. In 1753 he was converted to Roman Catholicism, but returned to Protestantism under the influence of a Swiss pastor with whom he resided at Lausanne. From 1758 to 1762 he was employed on military work; in 1761 he published in French his *Essai sur l'étude de la Littérature*. Three years later, while on a visit to Rome, he conceived the idea of relating the fall of the Roman Empire, a work at which he laboured when settled in London and during the years of his Parliamentary career. The first volume of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* appeared in 1776, and was received very favourably, but the author's attitude to early Christianity brought forth a whole series of protests and lively controversies. After the second and third volumes (1781), Gibbon retired to Lausanne, and completed his task with the fourth volume in 1788. He enjoyed the friendship of the Neckers, at that time in exile at Coppet, and died in 1794. His journals and memoirs, part of which he wrote in French, remain unpublished. Several of his autobiographical notes were collected in a condensed form or added to his letters, etc., by Lord Sheffield (*Miscellaneous Works of Gibbon*, 1814). *Letters*, ed. Prothero, 1896; *Memoirs*, ed. Hill, 1900. *Decline and Fall*, ed. Bury, 1909-13. See J. C. Morison, *Gibbon* (English Men of Letters), 1878; Sainte-Beuve, *Lundis*, vol. viii.; J. M. Robertson, *Gibbon*, 1925.

its worth, despite the even more scrupulous efforts of modern historians.

His ideal, however, is not one of mere historical accuracy. He *feels that he can exercise to a great extent his individual* choice, as to the method of arranging his subject-matter. He aims at a synthesis, at a connected and clear relation of facts. *In the organisation of his materials* he shows the boldness of a master mind, building up an edifice of prose, the architectural idea of which is the cult of the beautiful. Exactitude and objectivity are thus combined with art in a thousand ways, and of necessity suffer from the compromise; but on the other hand they are raised to a superior plane of consistency, which they owe to the unity of one presiding thought and vision.

Gibbon's thought is philosophical, and his vision is that of a poet; *but the great effort of his intellectual power is concentrated* in the desire to understand. He instinctively looks for the developments and changes of things. He can appreciate the value of institutions, of public life, of customs and habits, even if he fails to recognise the full importance of these social elements. The decline and the fall of ancient Rome are bound up with political happenings, which, in turn, are inseparable from moral causes. And it is such causes that Gibbon sets out to unravel, with a penetrating discrimination which suggests the method and example of Montesquieu. In other respects also he is much indebted to France, to the learning of a Tillemont, as to *the elegant lucidity of the French political writers*

Viewing thus at one glance the history of the long transition which saw the development of Europe from its ancient order to the birth of a new civilisation, his judgment discerns only a natural series of connected facts. His point of view is that of the modern scientist. During the years which witness the decadence of Rome, Christianity in its rise and progress is a moral and political growth that spreads across the paths of decay; so that between a decadent state on the one hand and the new cult on the other, there exists an obscure and intricate relationship, as to which religion and the Church have built up a positive doctrine. *Gibbon, however, sees that interrelation* in quite a different light; and as, while he thinks with complete freedom, he does not feel that he can speak freely, he adopts towards the orthodox

thesis an attitude of cold deference and discreet irony, whicl serves in a rather ineffective way to mask his aggressive scepti cism. The organic connections which make the most opposit aspects of the evolution of mankind mutually dependent, ar interpreted by a kind of positive realism; the mystical awakening of souls appears as another side of the general breaking up of intelligence; while the formation of the ecclesiastical order is hailed not only as an effect, but also as a cause of the ruin of the social order.

With an intrepid brush Gibbon sets out to alter all the accepted lights and shades in the traditional picture of these early centuries; the prestige of a benign and enlightened humanity sheds a soft glow over the heathen world as it sinks to its fall; the victory of Christianity, strong by reason of its intrinsic virtues and stronger still through its fanatical spirit, is hardly distinguishable from that of Barbarism. Without claiming the intervention of supernatural causes, historians of to-day attribute a very different part to the spiritual stimulus which the cult of Christianity brought with it, characterising it rather as a deep quickening of the conscience. It can therefore be understood why believers reproach Gibbon with a lack of sympathetic intuition.

In these chapters which reflect the mental outlook of a Voltaire, Gibbon's art deals often in the sober tints of implied meaning. Yet, despite such reticence and the method of insinuation, his work as a whole possesses a genuine vigour, moving forward with a clear and ample sweep, so broad and powerful that it has been compared with the movement of some great epic. Flashes of the Romantic sense of historical origins at times enliven an evocation of the past which is essentially explanatory. He has no misgivings, no inward torment of thought; the play of pure intellect provides him with a serenity, just as the sole power of reason has moulded after its fashion a life of worthy and wise endeavour.

The style of Gibbon has acquired a well-deserved fame. More simple than that of Johnson, it is still not free from obvious elaboration, and from some oratorical solemnity. There is also a slightly artificial elegance, a too frequent use of antithesis, and a touch of rhetoric, which mark the language as that of the eighteenth century. But on the other hand, the verbal tex-

ture of the whole presents a perfect solidity, and is marred in no way by the polish which it has received. The plan of the work shows Gibbon to be a writer of the greatest constructive genius, and one of the sanest of logicians. At the same time he is a narrator, uniting the gifts of the novelist with those of the historian; he has welded such various elements into a book of clear and absorbing reading, whose interest is renewed and sustained with every page. Lastly, strong creative imagination bathes *this monumental fresco in a light that is somewhat cold*, but tranquil, and full of suggestion to the mental sight of the reader.

To be consulted: A Blum, *Hogarth*, 1923; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. x. chaps. xiii and xiv.; J. G. Robertson, *Studies in the Genesis of Romantic Theory in the Eighteenth Century*, 1924, Saintsbury, *History of Criticism*, 1902; Seth, *English Philosophers and Schools of Philosophy*, 1912, Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 1902, idem, *The English Utilitarians*, 1900; Thomas, *Le Poète Edward Young*, etc., 1901; Thorpe, *Priestley*, 1906.

CHAPTER V

THE CLASSICAL TEMPERAMENTS

1. *The Later Classicists and Independent Writers.*—If the historic age of classicism does come to an end, classicism itself never dies. As it represents in the life of literature one of the fundamental phases, associated with one of the essential aspects of artistic creation, it can disappear only to reappear, and never is entirely effaced. With many it preserves a dim and hidden existence; while it remains in its fullness as a clear and well-defined factor with some exceptional temperaments, which carry the spirit of one literary period into the next, thus both harking back to the past and giving a premonition of the future. Even in the heyday of Romanticism writers will be found who, belated in a way, will be precursors just as well.

From 1770 to 1800, however, it is fairly obvious that a certain phase in English literature is about to end. The artistic codes which for well-nigh a century have held the field are now becoming more and more inadequate; at the same time life itself is responsible for the creation of other codes, which are tentative to a great extent, but have a vitality which leaves little place for doubt. This contrast is to be seen especially in the verse of the period.

The poets of note during these thirty years form, as it were, two natural groups. The first consists of those who, more influenced by the new spirit, are already giving it a pronounced expression; certain even succeed in effecting to a large extent the necessary renovation of form; in the case of Blake, the outstanding poet of this first group, there is little to distinguish him from the Romantic generation who were to be his contemporaries for the latter part of his life. The second group are more strictly obedient to the traditional modes of inspiration and style; not that they are against any desire for change, or do not experience the need for innovation in poetry; but their very efforts are guided by the stereotyped codes which they have never dared to

challenge, so that even when the vague tremors of a new-felt inspiration stir their souls, their poetry remains fettered to mechanical processes and passive adherence to custom. They show much less the promise of the future than the signs of a decadence; they are the last of the direct line of classical poets.

Lastly, the literary transition of the century is represented as well, whether in prose or in poetry, by some more vigorous personalities, with whom the dominance of classicism is not a merely passive survival, but answers to the deliberate choice of a temperament. Here indeed one plainly seizes the deep-rooted continuation of a type of mind that will not disappear.

In the heart of the pre-Romantic period, at a time when the new literary tendencies are gaining ground on every side, these artists, showing their independence in their own way, react against the new spirit and follow the truth of their instinct. To the growing cult of the emotions, the bold flights of a released imagination, to the turbid, ambiguous, self-indulgent, and perhaps even insincere element in the fervid exaltation of souls, they respond by a mood of uneasy hostility. They keep as it were immune when all the literary atmosphere around them is charged with the contagious upsetting influence of the new ideas; they remain the supreme masters of themselves; and they react in the spirit of a malicious irony, and a realism that is either refined or bitter. The novels of Miss Burney and Jane Austen, and the poetical work of Crabbe, adhere to the main tradition of the eighteenth century; and at the same time they suggest that desire for balance which will be the keynote of a new age, after Romanticism has bloomed and faded in its turn.

2. *The Poets.*—A difficulty presents itself when poetry comes to be considered, towards the classification of the various moods that animate it. It cannot subsist on pure reason, and will at least tinge its intellectual themes with emotion Therefore the oppositions between the general moods of writers are most often less clear-cut in poetry than in prose. The closing years of the eighteenth century offer a case in point. The mingling, in unequal proportions, of the new sentimentalism and of all the abstract ideas handed down from the age of reason, tends to lessen the gap that separates the poets of the two groups, and at times would seem even to unite them. There is no set line of demarcation. Still, when averages are considered, the inner

opposition comes out with unmistakable clearness. The didactic and essentially intellectual inspiration is preferably associated with the passive acceptance of pseudo-classical rules; on the contrary, it is by virtue of their strong passion, and their neglect of the petty niceties of form, that the great poets of the pre-Romantic period rise above an art already out of date.

The individual temperaments, however, preserve their duality of character with all its complexity. Even as Erasmus Darwin,[1] the typical example of this decadent literature, belongs indeed to a time when the average mind likes the softening influence of some pleasing, soothing emotion. To him, as to the immediate disciples of Pope, poetry represents a game of skill; but the ingenuity therein displayed has now become less drily intellectual, and tends more and more towards an affected, didactic sentiment. The superficial nature of the emotion is revealed by the cold indifference which can permit a striving after mere verbal effects, a patchwork of epithets, the preciosity of an amorous botanist; which again mingles personified abstractions, unending allegories, all the stereotyped resources and the descriptive artist, with some touches of sincere realism, and with the thoughts of a noble mind. For while the intellect plays a very active part in the life of Erasmus Darwin—to say nothing of his remarkable intuitional gifts—his sensibility is not altogether false. If his poetry is largely artificial, it is because his inspiration is crushed under the tricks and conventions, the metaphors and elegant turns, the queer system of plant mythology, which weigh it down like some overwhelming burden.

This lack of inventive spontaneity is reflected in the inertia of the prosodic instinct, with the result that the inevitable measure employed is, as one would expect, the rhymed couplet—the essence of cadenced regularity. The monotony of the rhythm, and the tedious observance of the pauses in each line, are perhaps the surest proof of the paralysing impotence which lies hidden at the root of an effort, estimable in itself, to renovate poetry through an imaginative interpretation of science.

[1] The grandfather of Charles Darwin; born in 1731, died in 1802; *The Botanic Garden:* Part I., *The Economy of Vegetation;* Part II., *The Loves of the Plants,* 1789-91; *The Temple of Nature, or the Origin of Society,* 1803. In prose: *Zoönomia, or the Laws of Organic Life,* 1794-96; *Phytologia, or the Philosophy of Agriculture,* 1800. See C. Darwin, *Life of Erasmus Darwin,* 1887; S. Butler, *Evolution Old and New,* 1879; Brandl (Schipper's *Wiener Beiträge,* vol. xxx.), 1909.

The same manner in tone and style, a confused mixture of the traditional fashions in language with the new fashion of feeling, merged into one common passiveness of taste, characterises the writers of this group. When, as in the work of "Peter Pindar,"[1] there is an attempt to revive satire, it is no less prosaic than it is vulgarly forcible. With him a spirit of mockery excludes any attempt at sentiment, while a reminiscence of the orthodox ode results in a laboured variety of rhythms; but the result has all the barrenness of a degenerate classicism, and nothing that would suggest the inspiring force of the true classical spirit.[2] In Robert Bloomfield's work,[3] a racy strength, a temperament that savours of the people, is warped and weakened through the medium of an acquired style, a studied elegance, a commonplace regularity. Even Campbell,[4] whose mature years coincide with all the great period of Romanticism, bears for life the imprint of the unconscious ideal of correctness, abstract sublimity, and verbal felicity, which he has received from Pope or his disciples, and which his first poem does realise. His patriotic fragments, with their rousing intensity of appeal, some interesting attempts, and here and there the scattered accents of unsustained vigour, do not efface from his work the impression of an unfulfilled destiny, thwarted, might one say, by the moral anachronism of a wavering inspiration. He is remembered by several short poems, in which the sincerity of feeling restrains and simplifies the form.

3. *The Novel: Miss Burney, Jane Austen.*—Having started in the period which stretches from 1770 to 1800, the literary careers of Miss Burney, Jane Austen, and the poet Crabbe continued well into the decisive years of the Romantic era. But their work, if judged by its essential features, shows the stamp

[1] John Wolcot (1738-1819), whose pseudonym was "Peter Pindar," wrote numerous parodies and satires on his contemporaries

[2] Christopher Anstey (1724-1805), an author whose *New Bath Guide* (1766) was very popular in the eighteenth century, had at least an instinctive perception of the familiar freedom which a comic and satirical inspiration demands. His verse, which often lapses into doggerel, has a certain spontaneous ease in its flow. This liberation from the strict rules of prosody by means of a good-natured simplicity is, as it were, a dim intuition of one of the ways along which the coming rejuvenation of poetry will be accomplished.

[3] Robert Bloomfield (1766-1823): *The Farmer's Boy*, 1800, *Rural Tales*, 1802, etc.

[4] Thomas Campbell (1774-1844): *The Pleasures of Hope*, 1799; *Gertrude of Wyoming*, 1809, etc. *Poetical Works*, ed. Robertson, 1907 See the Study of Hadden (Famous Scots Series), 1899

of the years preceding this age. To the characteristic traits of the new literature which, we have seen, were in evidence long before 1800, the reaction of these writers is hostility or reserve. Their artistic impulses swing back to motives, themes and forms which make them much rather the heirs of the classical tradition in its essence; and their temperaments, to the very end, bear the deep mark of that early choice. Their mental outlook remains that of the close of the eighteenth century.

Of the three, Miss Burney[1] is the least remote from the first flush of sentimentalism in England; she remains, more than not, a sentimentalist herself. Richardson she hails as a master; in *Evelina* she takes from him the idea of a novel in letters, a tone of conscious moralising, the study of virtue among women as a subject for a plot—a study which remains with her discreet and unobtrusive; and the setting up of a strong contrast between the good and the wicked. From the atmosphere of her own day she acquires the habit of the ever-ready tear, and the lavish display of feeling. But if such traits tend to stamp her as one of a school of writers, she has others which single out her talent as one of the most original. The spontaneous vivacity of her verve, the fresh new touch she brings to all her observation of customs and manners, and behind her brilliant gift that clear judgment, readily ironical, of a young person in full control of herself, all make her an exponent of satire and realism, in which her innermost nature seems to have dwelt and had its being.

Fashionable society has always delighted in its own reflected image; but never before had it seen itself through the eyes of a young girl of so arch a temperament and so shrewd a nature, who could penetrate from the feminine point of view the weak points of drawing-room life, and in the most delightful manner completely reverse the picture of it painted by writers of the

[1] Frances (or more familiarly, Fanny), the second daughter of Doctor Burney, a musician of note, was born in 1753 and introduced at an early age into the fashionable society of London. Her novel, written in secret, *Evelina, or a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, 1778, had a great success; she acknowledged the authorship and in 1782 published *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress*. Attached to the court as one of the queen's maids of honour from 1786 to 1791, she married in that year General d'Arblay, a French emigrant, and resided in Paris from 1802 to 1812. After the publication of her last two novels—*Camille*, 1796; *The Wanderer*, 1814—she wrote a Life of her father (1832), and died in 1840. Her *Diary and Letters* were published by her niece (1842-46), ed. by W. C. Ward, 1904. See Dobson, *Fanny Burney*, 1903; M. Masefield, *Evelina; Diary*, ed. Dobson, 1904. *The Story of F. Burney*, 1927.

opposite sex; yet who was able at the same time to flatter the taste of her readers by showing a sincere respect for rank and worldly conventions. There is, to use a phrase not yet then in vogue, a certain snobbery in her work; but it is a quality which enables her more readily to seize in its very essence the superficial, brilliant and frivolous life she describes; and her description is pleasing, because she has the gift of a witty and animated style. She often shows up the little whims of people with no excess of indulgence; and in some of the figures she has drawn with a rather too pronounced touch of comedy we are reminded of Smollett. In other cases, we think of Fielding, or even of Sterne. The author of *Evelina* had a precocious and assimilative talent. But Miss Burney does retain a personality, a charm peculiarly her own, a gift of greater precision in her pen pictures of Society than anyone before her; a rendering of conversation more light, more rapid and more true. Never before has the real atmosphere of social gatherings and pleasure haunts, with all their gossip, nor the feverish excitement of those momentous days which open with the heroine's entry into society and close with her marriage, been described so successfully. Here is a picture of the aristocracy of the time with its sense of refinement in contrast to its relative lack of delicacy; it must be admitted that Miss Burney herself sometimes shows a slightly blunt taste in the way she upbraids the vulgarity of the middle classes. And this first tentative revelation of the feminine self in the novel, if we leave aside the bold freedom of a Mrs. Behn or a Mrs. Manley, does not conceal that inner ardour of imagination which will often develop in a life whose interests are all bound up in love.

And still, what predominates is common sense, coloured to some extent by the spirit of dry calculation. The term "Romantic" is hardly ever used except ironically. The pictures of happiness held out are such as a social world will allow in which wealth, birth and health are yet the almost indispensable conditions of any success. The second novel of Miss Burney, *Cecilia*, with greater care in the writing, has less of the fresh liveliness of the first; it is yet more closely obedient to the fashions in vogue, whether literary or intellectual. The *Memoirs* of Madame d'Arblay shows us a woman of sufficient talent and feeling to take in the various interests and picturesque aspects of

the social life which surrounds her, and whose image she has preserved; but entirely unable to rise above them.

Those traits reappear in the work of Jane Austen[1] but further developed and chiefly much refined. By virtue of a stronger personality and a keener sense of delicacy in art, she is a writer of the first rank.

Miss Burney had connected the whole fate of her characters with the central crisis in the life of woman, when the possibility of marriage lies directly in her path, and thus had created what may be termed the domestic novel.[2] In the hands of Jane Austen the subject is thoroughly sifted, and more strictly reduced to essentials; all the worldliness over which the authoress of *Evelina* loves to linger is unknown to her or is omitted, because the circle of her experience is more narrow, or indeed purely intimate. Her novels rarely treat of anything save the restricted circle of home life, and all social interests are gathered round it. The atmosphere is one of provincial calm with a very limited outlook, where the extremes of wealth and poverty are unknown. In this little world of country gentry, clergymen and middle-class people, social intercourse is smooth and simple; few are the incidents which could be called dramatic; so that an observer's attention may concentrate on shades of character. The realism of Jane Austen is more truly psychological than that of Richardson, for it is free from the tragic obsessions of moral conscience. With its greater freedom, it acquires a greater purity. There is an extraordinary degree of truth in the picture it paints of reality—of a group of human beings, their relations one with another, their clashes and affinities, their mutual influences, their conversations.

[1] Jane, youngest daughter of George Austen, a country parson, was born in Hampshire (1775), received a careful education, and led an uneventful, home-keeping life amid the quiet provincial surroundings of the South. She began to write at an early age, and three of her novels were already completed before the end of the century, but they did not appear in print until a later date: *Sense and Sensibility* in 1811, *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813, *Mansfield Park* in 1814. *Emma* appeared in 1816; *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* after her death in 1817. A fragment (*Love and Friendship*) was published in 1922; another in 1925. There are several cheap editions of the novels (see Everyman's Library, etc.; ed. R. W. Chapman, 1923); the *Letters* were published in 1884. See W. and R. A. Austen-Leigh, *Jane Austen, Her Life and Letters*, 1913; the studies by Goldwin Smith (Great Writers), 1890; Helm, 1909; P. Fitzgerald, 1912; Cornish (*English Men of Letters*), 1913; Kate and Paul Rague (*Jane Austen*), 1914; Léonie Villard (*Jane Austen*), 1914; R. Brimley Johnson, 1927.

[2] The theme had already been adumbrated in the *Pamela* of Richardson and the *Amelia* of Fielding.

And this gift is explained by the immediate intuition she brings to her study of character, an intuition so natural and supple that it appears absolutely simple. Her clear-sighted eyes read through the inner minds of those who live around her, or of the beings whom she invents and animates, just as if those minds were transparent. She seizes them in their depths, although at first we do not get this impression, nor does she claim to give it. Only by a slight tremor in her style, whose even course is like that of some transparent stream, are we made aware of the tension, the nervous vigour, the effort put forth by her thought to comprehend and surmount the unseen obstacles that bar its progress. And everything dissolves into light. The secret complexities of self-love, the many vanities, the imperceptible quiverings of selfishness, all that a Rochefoucauld had shown up in the strong and bitter note of straightforward denunciation, and which at a later date the pessimistic novel will dissect with such profuseness and intensity of method, is here indicated or suggested so calmly and with so sober a touch that the author's personal reaction is reduced to a minimum. There is nothing more objective than those stories with their spirit of gentle tolerance, one might even say their naïvety, if a subtle suggestion of irony did not hover over every page, revealing a sharpness of vision that could be unmercifully severe.

The sentimentality of Miss Burney is entirely absent. Everything shows a delicacy of touch, a sense of balance, a serene reasonableness. All Jane Austen's work is transfused with the spirit of classicism in its highest form, in its most essential quality: a safe, orderly harmony among the powers of the mind, a harmony where of necessity the intellect is paramount. So classical, so delicately shaded is that method, that we are strongly reminded of the art of the great French analysts. Jane Austen writes as one who is entirely ignorant of the growing force of Romanticism, which already has spread its power around her; or rather she holds herself aloof, meeting its fascination with ironical immunity. One of her first novels, *Northanger Abbey*, is a most penetrating criticism of the self-deception practised by those whose souls are intoxicated with the spell of artificial fear. The morbid cult of an emotion that is too readily excited to be genuine is linked up on the one hand with literary conventions, which supply it with its resources; on the other,

with a deranged condition of mind and conduct, of which it is directly the cause; and nothing could improve on the neatness of the dissection. Her attitude towards Romanticism was to grow less critical with the progress of time. In *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* there is a warming of the thought, a greater tenderness of feeling, and an easier reconciliation with the tone of the epoch. She allows it to be seen here that she is not in complete agreement with the hierarchy of social order. But to the end her vision of life remains primarily clear, though not dry. The power of facts, and the material conditions of happiness, are accepted with a simplicity far removed from the slightest hint of revolt; while the moral teaching embodies a wisdom free from all illusions, the fruit of a perfectly healthy heart and mind.

That exquisite analysis is no enemy to creative power; Jane Austen's work shows us a wealth of character studies. They are not all equally good, those of women being at once more searching and more lifelike than those of men. But if she has reconstructed souls from the inside with the full and finished touch of the great masters, she has also the talent of picturesque evocation, and knows how to sketch figures with so sure and suggestive a pen that they stand out in a strong and unforgettable relief. Her power of perception is keen and fresh; she immediately grasps the individual traits, and so the odd as well, and at least potentially the comic. Her work represents in an original way the eternal comedy of life with all its whims and fancies; and as reality only awakens in her a spirit of amusement without bitterness, in which self-possession does not exclude a feeling of sympathy, just as her divination of character does not destroy the concrete sense of faces, gestures and acts, she allows the virtual quaintness of whatever is human to grow active of itself, and to tell; and she abundantly possesses the implicit eloquence of humour.

Her range of effects is wonderfully varied, extending as it does from the piquant, youthful gaiety of *Pride and Prejudice*, where her art is almost perfect at the first attempt, to the mellow maturity of the last novels, in which it is perhaps less sure, less free from lengthy or weak passages, but is richer on the other hand in moral significance. But the literary personality behind

it all retains throughout her work a unique charm, associated with a most sober distinction of technique and style.

4. *Realistic Poetry; Crabbe.*—The paradox included in the work of Crabbe[1] is that with him the same desire for truth, the same sympathy with the poor, which were going to be the source of the poetical reform of Wordsworth, should give a new lease of life to the classical tradition of form. His realism, proceeding as it does from the pent-up spirit of a moody pessimism, brings him into opposition with certain aspects of the literary conventions of his day; and what he thus rejects belongs in some measure to the past, in some to the future. From ancient times the pastoral poem, the idyll, and the bucolic style in verse had transmitted to one another an optimism which was imaginary and superficial; the signs of a return to reality, apparent in the poetry of Gay, Allan Ramsay and Thomson, had not altered the purely fictitious character of rustic themes. Then came sentimentalism, which added a new and alluring charm to all the former illusions. An interest was now taken in country life, people sought it with the somewhat hectic eagerness of the jaded town-dweller, and many pleasing tears were shed over the enjoyments and patriarchal rejoicings which Goldsmith had pictured in his *Deserted Village*. What with the nymphs and amorous shepherds on the one hand, what with the sturdy jovial peasants on the other, it was everywhere images of happiness that met the eye. Against those fanciful dreams there surges in Crabbe a rebellious mood, made of experience. He was born, he grew up among humble folks; and whether they toiled in their fishing boats or ploughed a soil of little promise, their life to him was one series of bitter tasks beset by worries, poverty and illness, ending within the walls of the poorhouse; and the sight of their

[1] [illegible] at Aldborough, on the east coast of England, in [illegible] poor *family. He practised medicine for some* [illegible] find discouragement and difficulties until Burke [illegible] 781). *He took Orders, became chaplain to the* [illegible] several livings which placed him above need. [illegible] *ry* (1781), *enjoyed a fair success, The Village* [illegible] long silence, *The Parish Register* (1807), *The* [illegible] 12), *Tales of the Hall* (1819), while they kept his name before the public, did not add in any way to his reputation He died in 1832. *Poems*, ed. Ward, 1907; *Poetical Works*, ed. Carlyle, 1908. See Ainger, *Crabbe* (English Men of Letters), 1903; Huchon, *Un poète réaliste anglais, George Crabbe*, 1906.

few brief joys saddened his heart no less than that of their griefs. So at the source of all his poetry there lie a protest of the moral conscience as of the instinct for truth, a feeling of pity, and a craving for intellectual justice; lastly, a bitterness from which the touch of a personal grievance is not absent.

With other natures, such motives will produce different results; as Crabbe's starting-point is not far removed from that of Wordsworth, it is not either from that of Dickens. But the pressure of a painful environment has weighed upon him too long; he has suffered too much, and the radiating heat of his heart has been quenched. He has no longer any hope; his sympathy with mankind has lost all its joy. Every page of his work bears the trace of a nature driven back upon itself, of feelings repressed, of thoughts ever brooding upon the merciless limitations which reality seems to be forcing upon the soul. And this vigorous concentration, in which there is both the principle of creative energy, and at the same time a trace of morbidness, is the innermost spring of his art; to it he owes the originality of his talent, and its weaknesses.

Classicism with Crabbe is a reaction, and recognises itself as such. His passion for truth gathers new strength from a spiteful contempt for dead literary illusions. He jeers at the fanciful novel and the tales of imaginary terror. Real misfortune is to him enough. He chooses to tell it with restraint. The regular, monotonous, closely woven rhythm of the heroic couplet is the appropriate setting for the mood of quiet and of simple strength which the poet feels, and which he upholds against all the enthusiasms, the studied effects, the false ornaments of an optimistic imagination. No other measure has shorter breath; it is the least pretentious as well, and on that very account the most sincere; it is prosaic, like life itself. The traditional language, the "poetic diction" of Pope and Gray, is a ready instrument of expression; it is natural, since it is generally accepted; to adopt it, therefore, is, in Crabbe's opinion, the surest way to avoid all the vanity of verbal pretensions. Thus it is that out of his very desire for simplicity and truth Crabbe is led instinctively to favour a conventional style; the craving he feels for novelty in matter finds no correlative in the field of form. His ear has no fastidious requirement; the artist in him demands no sensuous delights. Bent upon reality, humble of spirit, he writes in a

language where all the débris of classical elegance, noble terms, generalities and abstractions, clothe the most concrete of subjects and themes.

For his poetry has an originality quite its own, and of the rarest flavour. The inspiration is new; it lights up so vividly the most familiar aspects of daily life, those which literature had least fondly dwelt upon, that it seems to reveal them for the first time. The village, the borough, their inhabitants, the stages in their fate, their labours, their temptations, their falls, and occasionally their virtues, are drawn for the first time with a minute, accurate brush. English country life at the end of the eighteenth century is thus depicted in its entirety, as seen by an observer whose resolute purpose is to alter in no particular the image of truth, were it even almost always a bitter truth.

The picture has the faithfulness, the scrupulous detail of Dutch painting; but it lacks the sensuous joy or the passion for sheer intensity of character that can instil a kind of happiness into the realism of the Flemish School. Here everything is dull and mournful, and one feels that if the artist has ended by loving that sadness, the edge of his suffering in it has not been blunted. For one thing, the descriptive talent of Crabbe, although always confined within the limits of immediate presentment, and never broadening into dreamy suggestiveness, or eking itself out through the complementary power of music, at least has an extraordinary power of evocation. Whatever he has seen, his eye retains and holds for ever; he shows it to us, perfectly, drily, in a colourless and cold light which awakes a few gleams on the surface of stagnant pools, but which idealises nothing. Moreover, in order thus to introduce into poetry a whole range of new sensations and images, the mind must submit to some stretching of its faculties; its very vocabulary has to seek the aid of terms still unpolished, untouched by literature.

The realism of his method brings to Crabbe's style as to his art a salutary touch of vigour and novelty. Even the measure of his verse is not destitute of individual value; his couplet is no longer that of Pope, so brisk, so sparklingly neat; but his rhythm rather suggests a homely conversation, a kind of plodding, painstaking story, the very slowness of which permits of a deliberate statement of facts; and which finds a further resource in the "triplets."

An art which in *The Village* is clumsy, heavy, but already strong, singularly sure as to its main intent, and of unsurpassed robustness; ampler canvases, more brilliant hits, and a more unequal success, in *The Parish Register* and chiefly *The Borough;* a still imperfect composition, but the firmly stamped unity of tone, and a style in which rough, dense elements are welded together by means of energetic, simple methods—antithesis, repetition, alliteration: such is the talent of Crabbe in his best works. In the rest of his poetry he is weak, and tends to be verbose. Altogether, he keeps a place by himself in English literature. He is overshadowed neither by Wordsworth, who exalts realism and glorifies it through a touch of mysticism, nor by the novelists of social pity, who have given larger scope and livelier animation to his plea in favour of the poor. The truth of his pen pictures is harsh and incomplete, but within its own limits is unrivalled; his pathos is sombre, crushingly painful at times, but this only makes it more telling. The characteristics of his expression single him out as the last of the classical writers; but there is also in his poetry the suggestion of a virtual Romanticism that has been repressed, the play in conflict of a suffering sensibility, and of an imagination resolutely bent under the yoke of the real.[1]

To be consulted: *Cambridge History of English Literature,* vol. x. chap. iii., vol. xi. chaps. vii. viii., vol. xii. chap. x.; Courthope, *History of English Poetry,* vol. vi.; O. Elton, *A Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830,* 1920; Huchon, *Crabbe,* 1906; Mrs. Oliphant, *Literary History of England in the End of the Eighteenth and Beginning of the Nineteenth Century,* 1882; L. Villard, *Jane Austen,* 1914.

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[1] The tendency to realism in the meticulous observation of nature is clearly seen in the pages of Gilbert White (1720-93), *The Natural History of Selborne* (1789); and in the description of rural life by John Langhorne (1735-79), *The Country Justice* (1774-77).

CHAPTER VI

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND ENGLISH LITERATURE

1. *Acceptance and Rejection of the New Ideas.*—The movement of ideas which paved the way for the French Revolution of 1789 can be traced in part to English influences. On the other hand, the French "philosophers" of the eighteenth century left their mark on England. Rousseau, in particular, had a spiritual following on the other side of the Channel.

Already, before the fall of the Bastille, there is evidence of a keener interest being taken throughout Europe in political and social problems, as though in anticipation of some coming decisive crisis. The outbreak of the Revolution is immediately felt through the neighbouring countries. From 1789 to 1815, the drift of European literature and thought is in certain respects determined in relation to France, whose stormy fate promotes amongst governments, nations and writers diverse reactions of sympathy, fear and hostility.

In the domains of political theory, philosophy and literature, England after 1730 is giving to France even more than she receives from it. But this proportion is reversed by the turmoil of the Revolution. Engrossed in its own affairs or propagating its ideas throughout Europe, Revolutionary and Imperial France is almost entirely absorbed in active interests, leaving to its political exiles, to a Madame de Staël or a de Villers, the opportunity of gathering the germs of foreign influence which the Romantic movement will stir into life. England, on the contrary, shaken as it is by the storm of events in France, and torn at first between a feverish admiration and a hatred mingled with terror, next almost completely united in the national struggle against Napoléon, is in a state of receptive susceptibility towards the contagious influence and example of France, whether she welcomes the new ideas, or violently opposes them, and through that opposition strengthens her consciousness of self. France is the pole of attraction or repulsion around which English intel-

lectual life, in a large measure, tends to group itself during that period.

This relation to France, whether in a positive or in a negative sense, is of use in enabling us to classify individual minds, and to isolate a group of writers, not too artificially, during the first phase of the period. The oncoming of the French Revolution, its actual beginnings, and successive stages, are, from about 1780 to 1800, the predominant factor in the mental outlook of political theorists, polemical writers, novelists, and even dramatists and poets. From about 1800, on the contrary, the moral and imaginative stir caused by the great upheaval enters into a new literature as one of its elements, and combines with the diverse impulses which give birth to English Romanticism in its definitive form. The influence of the Revolution after 1800 will be, therefore, part and parcel of the study of the full-grown Romantic movement.

On the whole, in the course of the first period, the revolutionary or counter-revolutionary fever is not connected in a simple way with the growth of Romanticism. It stimulates energies, calls forth individual temperaments, and gives each an added impetus in the direction which its own instincts were ready to take. Therefore this literature, from a psychological point of view, seems to possess very mixed characteristics. The partisans of the Revolution are, for the most part, generous enthusiasts, guided by sensibility and swayed by imagination; but the doctrine of abstract liberty and equality appeals to reason, to passionate logicians it is given to propagate it; and its intellectual rigour causes it to be denounced by its adversaries as an inhuman and chimerical kind of geometry. With the conservatives, one expects to find, and one actually does find, self-control and a cold bearing in matters intellectual; they are fond of irony; and their satires in verse are naturally cast in the classical mould. But their indignation is equally prone to find expression in tones of vehemence; and the greatest of them all, Burke, quickens the organic doctrine of traditional order through a powerful and intuitive imagination, set off by a language of fiery eloquence.

Revolutionary literature reflects the conflict in the minds of men. That conflict deeply stirs the soul of the time, and hastens the germination of the new art which is preparing. But

this is a silent, an underground influence. It is after the keenest part of the struggle, in the quiet meditation of a relative lull, that the lasting and fruitful effect will be felt. Until then, the absorbing question which engrosses thought furnishes works of literature with their subject-matter, rather than it enters into the determination of their style; it is not yet a vital artistic influence. The great Revolutionary drama appeals to the whole of human nature, and calls all its rival faculties into play; it rouses souls to a pitch of enthusiasm, or tears them by an inner conflict; it is thus far from creating any psychological tone which one could describe as unified. And this is just what helps us to understand the very special moral quality of this epoch, in which the universal diffusion of sentiment associates it closely with every activity of the most clear-sighted and uncompromising reason.

2. *The Revolutionaries: Politics, the Novel, and the Stage.*—The Revolution, from the start, has adversaries who are opposed to it in principle, just as it can claim its supporters. Burke's indictment precedes the defensive arguments of Paine and Mackintosh. But, on the whole, the two attitudes adopted by English minds towards the events in France correspond to two successive phases, the second of which is that of hostility. Besides being the result of deeper and more mature reflection, the latter represents the instinctive opinion of the average mind, and is of a more lasting nature; so that the doctrine of Burke, brought into being as it is by momentary circumstances, has the ample scope of a national thesis, which for many years guided the trend of political thought.

The theorists of social utility who appealed to reason found themselves united for the defence of the abstract general principles which France had just proclaimed. A sermon by Price[1] had called forth the denunciations of Burke; Priestley[2] replied to these. Mackintosh[3] and Paine[4] championed the theme of liberty by consecrating their learning or zeal to its cause. Even

[1] See above, chap. iv. sect. 2. *Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, 1789.
[2] See idem. *Letters to Mr. Burke*, 1791.
[3] Sir James Mackintosh (1765-1832) · *Vindiciae Gallicae*, 1791.
[4] Thomas Paine (1737-1809), a Quaker by birth, was a strong supporter of the cause of the American revolutionaries (1776-83); then warmly upheld the French Revolution (*The Rights of Man*, 1791-92); opposed both Christianity and Atheism (*The Age of Reason*, 1794-95), and died in America. *Works*, ed. Conway, 1895-96; *Life*, by Conway, 1892. *Age of Reason*, republished in 1916. See F. J. Gould, *Thomas Paine*, 1925; M. A. Best, *Thomas Paine*, 1927.

to-day the treatise of Paine is not without interest. As a counter-weapon against the impassioned rhetoric of Burke, he discovers the efficacy of a vigorous style of popular appeal. Better than any polemical writer among his contemporaries, he represents the union of a fearless reasoning and critical mind, a mind almost French, with a perceptive sense which can appreciate the concrete nature of reality, according to the original English tradition.

But to Godwin [1] it was left to represent the extreme length to which intellectualism, in its application to social and moral problems, ever went in England. During those closing years of a century of reason, under the stress of the Revolutionary storm in France, the empiricism so deeply inherent in the normal English mind is rooted out of certain thinkers; leaving their thoughts to seek an equilibrium only in the coherence of principles, which can be deduced or brought into a system. Every tie, every limitation found in feelings, habits, prejudices, necessities of fact, are thus done away with; an all-powerful logic destroys the existing order in its minutest parts, and sets up an entirely new fabric in its place.

The intellectual search for truth and justice can alone give those ideal notions a precise outline. Justice and truth will be the work of a race guided by reason, a race which a well-planned system of education would from now onwards produce. Character can be moulded with a perfect sureness of touch, and the doctrine of determinism opens out before the eyes of mankind unlimited prospects of moral progress. Freed from the trammels of all emotional influence, each mind will find its own guiding standards in logical deduction. It will no longer be swayed by the illusions of feeling, but will be led by pure intelligence, which in every instance will reveal to it the highest goal of action, the common good. Such should be the one great aim of

[1] William Godwin (1756-1836) was the son of a dissenting minister; had already formed radical opinions, but had published nothing of importance, when the French Revolution suggested *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influences on General Virtue and Happiness*, 1793, a work which made him the chief intellectual representative of the most advanced party. His novels include: *Things as They Are, or the Adventures of Caleb Williams*, 1794; *St. Leon*, 1799; *Fleetwood*, 1805; *Mandeville*, 1817, etc. He published as well essays (*The Enquirer*, 1797); tragedies: a *Life of Chaucer*, 1803; a *History of the Commonwealth*, 1824-28. The essay on "Property" (from *Political Justice*) was republished by Salt in 1918. See Paul, *William Godwin*, 1876; studies by Ramus, 1907; Gourg, 1908; Roussin (Paris), 1914; F. K. Brown, *The Life of W. Godwin*, 1926.

the legislator; and a society founded upon reason will enjoy the full rights of equality and liberty. The existing distribution of wealth, the established forms of government, the traditional modes of living, even marriage itself, will be revised and remodelled according to those principles; and every constraint exercised upon the individual will be reduced to a *minimum*. If laws remain a necessary evil, and if the prudent man, in this era of transition, must refrain from using violence against the existing law, he shall at least do his utmost to hasten the advent of the happy time, when all healthy-minded men unite in the spontaneous harmony of their desires. Anarchy, therefore, is the ideal towards which the thought of Godwin is drifting, and the very pronounced note of his individualism completes or corrects the communistic character of his social dreams.

In its excessive simplicity—for it eliminates almost all the elements of fact which must enter into the solution of the problem—this doctrine projects on to the immediate future the abstract lines of a necessarily distant ideal; and mixes generous hopes with rigorous, no doubt imprudent, deductions. Slightly modified by its own progress, and less exclusive in its intellectualism from 1800 onwards, it remained the most energetic stimulus of the revolutionary spirit on English soil. Its influence has been widely and deeply felt; and this it owes to the fact that the courage which animates it, born as it was of an ardent idealism, easily won the sensibilities of men hungering after a happiness, which the soul-stirring events of the time seemed to bring within their reach.

In the glowing anticipation of this new hope, modern "feminism" was being formulated at the same time. The woman who demanded equality of rights and equal educational privileges was to be the wife of Godwin, but had formed her own ideas independently of him.[1] Her book on the subject is of uneven merit and somewhat confused, written in a forcible and at times declamatory style, but enlivened by a sincere passion for justice.

[1] Mary Wollstonecraft, born in 1759, was of Irish origin, married Godwin in 1797, and died the same year. Her published works include *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, 1787; *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792. *Posthumous Works* appeared in 1798. *Vindication*, etc., ed Pennell, 1892 See biography by Pennell, 1885; study by Taylor, 1911; de Routen (*Mary Wollstonecraft and the Beginnings of Female Emancipation in France and England*, 1923), M. Linford (*Mary Wollstonecraft*), 1924; *Memoirs of M. W*, written by W. Godwin, and edited by W. C. Durant, 1927.

It touches upon delicate problems, which it has the merit of raising, with more wisdom and sanity than is usually conceded. It is a century in advance with its theories, which are to-day accepted, or have become so familiar as to be no longer formidable. It points out how among women themselves are to be found the most dangerous abettors of the social minority of their sex, and it attributes this blindness to a false form of education, while clearly outlining the connection between the inferiority of woman and her economic dependence. It urges the need for co-education, for a national system of teaching; upon love, marriage and family relationship, its arguments have a wholesome savour and a breadth of opinion, and are being gradually incorporated in the social life of our times.

The ideal which coloured the theories of the revolutionary thinkers appealed too vividly to certain imaginations, for the novel of the time not to give it expression. But here the effort is mediocre, and interesting only from the historical point of view. There was in the new faith, when once it won the mastery of minds, a magnetism so powerful that all sense of discrimination, as of artistic choice, became subjugated to its influence. Those among its disciples who, in the end, were able to escape, did regain, along with their independence, the power of translating into a language of noble beauty the story of their lost illusions.

In this sphere also Godwin is the most outstanding figure. His novels, despite their glaring faults and stretches of barren monotony, retain a vigour which is not without effect. This they owe not to their doctrine, but to the temperament of the writer, who is keenly attracted to any analysis of a searching and complex nature, and who in building up his plot allows his imagination to dwell fondly upon the emotional influence of terror—in a manner akin enough to that of Mrs. Radcliffe's school. With other novelists, the zeal of proselytism encourages the naïvety of a naturally simple art. Whether their revolutionary ardour leads them towards a complete vision of a regenerated humanity,[1] or whether less direct propaganda takes a more discreet form, even veiling itself at times, the æsthetic values nearly always lose through a didactic thesis, by which

[1] In *Anna St. Ives*, 1792, by Thomas Holcroft (1745-1809); see *Life, Written by Himself*, ed. by E. Colby, 1925.

movement. The younger Colman[1] after interweaving morality with his love for nature in an exotic setting, endeavours to incorporate it in scenes drawn from reality. If, however, this group of writers has left no great work, it is not due to false æsthetic principles. The problem play and the social drama will develop an intense vitality, when the nineteenth century has widely diffused the power to become emotionally interested in the interplay of ideas. To the public of 1790, however, such plots had little else than a superficial interest.

3. *The Counter-Revolutionary Writers; The "Anti-Jacobin"; Burke.*—Political satire had found encouragement in the conflict waged between Pitt and the Tory Party on the one side, and the Whig Opposition on the other. From 1784 onwards, the *Rolliad*, a kind of fictitious epic, symbolising the intellectual sluggishness of the country squires, stubborn supporters alike of Church and State, is assailed in a series of versified parodies.[2] But with the triumph of the Revolution in France and the activity of its partisans in England, the instinctive desire for social preservation is alarmed; and the friends of order in their turn seize upon the weapon of ridicule. The excess to be feared seems no longer one of timidity, but rather of rashness. Irony is now on the side of a traditionalism which claims to be inseparable from good sense.

This cult of tradition, narrow and dogmatic, is stimulated to a remarkable vigour by the assurance that it has the broad support of national sentiment. The tone of the *Anti-Jacobin*[3] cannot be mistaken; it expresses both a temperamental and a racial hostility, in which patriotism, religion, devotion to the past, and the love for all accepted forms of discipline rise up horror-stricken against a contagious, manifold madness, which threatens all the altars of the nation's gods. The France of the Directory is jeered at and vilified, slashed for the Revolu-

[1] *Inkle and Yarico*, 1787; *The Heir at Law*, 1797.

[2] *The Criticisms of the Rolliad* appeared in the *Morning Herald*, and were followed by the *Political Eclogues* and the *Probationary Odes*, of analogous inspiration. This method of literary attack found an ally in "Peter Pindar" (see above, chap. v. sect. 2). A collected edition appeared in 1791.

[3] *The Anti-Jacobin* appeared from November, 1798, to July, 1799. Its chief founders were George Canning (1770-1827), John Hookham Frere (1760-1846), and William Gifford (1756-1826), the future editor of the *Quarterly Review*. A collection of selected pieces was published by H. Morley (*The Anti-Jacobin, etc.*, 1890); see ed. Edmonds, 1890; and *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin*, ed. by L. Rice-Oxley, 1924. See G. Festing, *J. H. Frere and His Friends*, 1899.

tion whose fundamental ideas she has inherited, and no less for the new order which she painfully tries to build up. Her English partisans are scourged and dishonoured. Never has hatred, nourished by all that springs from the revolt of mind, heart and instinct, by national passion and social fear, given vent to so terrible a denunciation. And feeding on those deep roots, the inspiration has an easy, telling verve. The wit in that collection of lampoons is very rarely delicate; the tone is every way brutal. Yet in the sneering and insulting attitude it adopts there is evidence of an often happy, at times superior talent. The burlesque vein which it has tapped furnishes it—as in the case of Erasmus Darwin and *The Loves of the Plants*—with parodies of extreme ingenuity, of great value as verbal achievements; and when the satirical impulse gives way before the serious passion which lurks in those violent pleasantries, and which bursts out in a heart-felt call to the genius of England, that poetry, still classical in form, reaches a sinewy and simple eloquence.

As an incentive, not only against the menace from abroad, but against the more dangerous madness which is creeping into the national consciousness of England, and awakens a belief in a justice based on the equality and fraternity of peoples, the *Anti-Jacobin* cites the name and work of Burke.[1] And of the thought of Burke, indeed, it is full.

Burke is first an orator, or rather an oratorical writer, for the texts which have been handed down to us owe nothing to

[1] Edmund Burke, born in Dublin in 1729, was the son of a Protestant father and a Roman Catholic mother; he studied at Trinity College, next in London, where he published a parody on Bolingbroke, *A Vindication of Natural Society*, 1756; a treatise on *The Sublime and Beautiful* (see above, chap. iv. sect. 3) He entered Parliament in 1765, and from 1766 onwards he was a member of the Whig Opposition. He criticised the attitude of the North Ministry towards the American

improvisation; and neither his voice nor his delivery was such as to heighten in any way the effect of those writings. His eloquence, studied as it is and self-conscious, preserves its sincerity through the genuine power of a naturally fervid thought, which has an end in view, advances towards it, and discovers itself gradually, as it develops, through its own motion. His impassioned arguments are enough controlled by his will to be orderly; but the logical plan which they seem to follow is not really the deepest and innermost; we feel that, when present, such a plan is superadded, and serves only to lend more accuracy to the progress of a demonstration, the successive parts of which organically grow one from another.

Burke's phrasing is forcible, most often elevated, and not free from pomposity; but the natural loftiness of a mind which raises all that it touches, the breadth of an outlook which can cope with the vastest subjects, and calls up wide prospects, are such that the garment of form, with all its majesty, does not sit ill upon the body which it clothes. While the style of Burke can be compact in its precision, direct and compelling, it is most often vehement, ironical, or pathetic. His numerous images do not always testify to a perfect taste; but they are always striking. The language is cadenced, obeying a desire for proportion, dignity and harmony, which instinctively tends to regular measures and periodic sentences, but submits at will to the necessary variety of effect, turning then to short, sharp-edged statements; and thus the rhythm admits of all the irregularities which are called for by the living flow of the speaker's voice.

The public speeches of Burke, and the treatises which he wrote to support various causes, belong equally to the literature of argument; they fall under the category of political eloquence. Now this kind of oratory shone with particular brilliance during the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. Hardly has Junius become silent when the conflict with America opens in Parliament and before the country at large; a prolonged struggle, in which the voice of Burke still sounds to us more audibly than all, but where many other voices commanded the attention of the time. Once this quarrel has been settled, the strong bearing of the Pitt Administration arouses intense opposition; the mental weakness of the king raises the question of a regency; 1788 sees the commencement of the trial of Warren Hastings, which only

ends in 1795; and lastly, with the fall of the Bastille, the French Revolution becomes a daily problem, rousing the antagonism of parties to a pitch of excitement.

If during these troubled times the discussion of important matters of State takes on a new aspect, the change is traceable as well to other reasons. A broadening oligarchy accepts the more frequent collaboration of public opinion, while the middle classes, enriched by industry, now openly claim a share in the government of the country. Then the publicity given to parliamentary debates is no longer opposed. Finally, English classical prose, now fully developed, is a subtle instrument which lends itself both to ordinary discussions of facts, and to the more ambitious efforts required of it by an age of oratory—an age of sentiment, when reason retains all its prestige; and when, from one end of Europe to the other, a uniform culture inspires a common confidence in discussion, in words, in the power of conviction, and in the goodwill of all thinking minds.[1]

But Burke's thought is too vigorous to remain inseparable from the form in which he expressed it. It has its own intrinsic value, whether it told on the course of historical events, or it was creative in the sphere of ideas. More than an orator, Burke is a statesman, capable of the shrewdest and deepest views; he owes this intuitive power to his strong sense of realities, to his varied culture, to his remembrance of the past, but above all, to his knowledge of mankind, and to the instinct he possesses of the complex reactions through which various social interests clash, adapt themselves, and are reconciled. His political insight is made of concrete perception and accurate psychology. His exact judgment as to the possible issues of the American revolt comes from his ability to understand the indomitable motives which prompted the defiant attitude of the colonists. If, as time goes on, he tends to change certain of his ideas, it is not due to any unprincipled fluctuations in character, but rather to the progress which is inevitable if personality has to keep abreast of life. First a Whig, then a Tory; at one time the defender of constitutional liberties, at another the sworn enemy of the

[1] The orators of the epoch, besides Burke, include Charles James Fox (1749-1806: *Speeches*, 1815; see biography by Trevelyan, new ed., 1923); Sheridan (see above, Book III chap. vi. sect. 5); William Pitt (1759-1806. *Speeches*, 1808, *War Speeches*, ed Coupland, 1915; *Life* by Stanhope, 1862; study by Whibley, 1906); Henry Grattan (1746-1820: *Speeches*, ed Madden, 1859; *Life* by Dunlop, 1889).

CHAPTER VII

PRE-ROMANTIC POETRY

1. *Mason, Beattie, Bowles.*—There is a significant gradation between the poets whose works continue and develop the transition towards new sources, and new artistic methods. A decisive step is taken when we pass from Mason and Beattie to Blake. The first two poets, standing upon the threshold of this period, inherit the achievement of their predecessors. In the very atmosphere around them, they find as floating suggestions the feeling for nature, melancholy, musing, the haunting love of ruins and the past. Out of those elements they make up a temporary synthesis. But their inspiration lacks the necessary strength and sincerity; they fail completely to realise the emancipation of poetical style. In one way they are the most representative of the pre-Romanticists, for with them tradition and the future are closely intermingled. To the reader of to-day, they still preserve some living interest; but the stamp of artificiality is upon all their work.

With Burns and Blake, the vigour of personality at last triumphs over literary convention. The one rediscovers the spontaneous truth of the heart; the other spiritualises language, melting its hardened crust, and so restores its former purity. The secret of Blake is none other than that of Wordsworth. His quite exceptional destiny, his temperament, did not permit of his founding a school, of his opening up in the eyes of all the broad direct avenue towards a new poetry. But in the full sense of the term, he was the first of the Romanticists.

Mason [1] cuts a mediocre figure beside Gray, of whom he is, as it were, a subdued copy. He is a scholar, or at least has

[1] William Mason (1724-97), the friend of Gray, also lived at Cambridge; published two tragedies: *Elfrida*, 1753; *Caractacus*, 1759; a descriptive poem in blank verse: *The English Garden*, 1772-82. He edited the *Works* of Gray, and added a biography in which he incorporated the poet's letters and journal (1775). See J. W. Draper, *W. Mason, a Study in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 1924.

scholarly pretensions; he is diligent and painstaking; his polished style and pathos suggest the leisure, the refinement of university life. But if he has the full conscience and methods of his friend, he has not the gift of his inspiration. His tragedies, prompted at once by a scrupulous classicism and by a lively historical imagination, are interesting efforts, but entirely artificial. *The English Garden* is not without its appeal; a feeling of tenderness, a true taste for simplicity and for Nature in her freedom, strive with the most conventional style, a professedly didactic purpose, and a descriptive rhetoric as cold as it is ornate. Certain of the deeper preferences of English sensibility are expressed in it; but they are voiced in a borrowed language, and there is no sign that the writer finds such a style inadequate.

Beattie[1] obeys a kind of vague instinct that the poetic medium requires being renovated. Venturing upon a great subject, he turns to the Spenserian stanza for an ample and beautiful rhythm. He handles it clumsily enough but not without some pleasant effects.

His other poems can be passed over, except a short meditation, *Retirement*, where there is a note of sincerity. *The Minstrel* is a work of vast conception, still didactic in theme, but with the added interest that it seeks to portray the inner life of the mind, and thus affords even in the matter itself the possibility of a lyricism which will be new and psychological. Beattie proposes as his subject the development of a past: Wordsworth's idea in *The Prelude* will be no other. But Beattie clothes his story in an atmosphere of legend, and introduces in a mediæval setting the wandering singer whom Macpherson and Percy had already endeared to their readers' imaginations. His craving for personal expression tends to give both his subject, and the metrical mould into which he has chosen to cast it, a note of meditative tenderness which is at times pleasing; while the artificial elements of the poem—its false archaism, its moralising theme, its still conventional style—fail to spoil the charm to be found in the true appreciation of the poet for the

[1] James Beattie (1735-1803) born in Scotland, became Professor of Moral Philosophy at Aberdeen, and wrote, in addition to several poems, an *Essay on Truth* (1770), which was an attack on Hume. He was also the author of *Essays* (1776), and of *Moral and Critical Dissertations* (1783). His main work, *The Minstrel* (1771-74), unfinished, was very successful. *Poetical Works*, ed. Dyer, 1866. See Forbes, *Beattie and His Friends*, 1904.

wild aspects of Scottish scenery. In the landscapes called up, in the emotion, and in the music of the language, the mind as well as the senses finds a spirit of harmony and a wealth of romantic suggestion. At other times, the abstractions are predominant. The second canto, which recalls *The Excursion* as the first does *The Prelude*, tends to be drily philosophical.

The work as a whole has its beauties, and, if compared with that of Wordsworth, seems surprisingly prophetical. The monotony of the measure, and the weak features of the style, do not altogether blot out some very commendable intentions —as, for example, the striving after a deep-felt and serious simplicity—which, taken up again by other writers, and much more fully realised, will prove to be creative.

This progress can be seen to a certain extent in the work of Bowles.[1] With him the quiet melancholy awakened by the contemplation of nature is expressed in words of moving simplicity. His *Sonnets* often speak the language of the heart; and although their inspiration tends to flag, and they do not reach, either, the unalloyed quality of a perfectly pure style, yet it is no wonder that such souls as thirsted for the freshness of genuine poetry should have found a relief in them; nor that the Lake poets should have hailed Bowles as their immediate predecessor.[2]

2. *Burns*.—Burns[3] brings an element of complication into

[1] William Lisle Bowles (1762-1850), a parson, and later canon of Salisbury. In his very large output of verses the most noteworthy are those of a collection of *Sonnets* (1789), augmented as edition succeeded edition. He edited Pope (1806), and criticised him so severely that Byron, Campbell and others entered against him into a hot controversy (summed up in *The Letters and Journals of Byron*, ed. Prothero, vol. v., 1901). *Poetical Works*, ed. Gilfillan, 1855; see J. J. van Rennes, *Bowles, Byron, and the Pope Controversy*, 1928.

[2] There is a mixture of sentimentalism and artificiality of style in the work of Anna Seward (1747-1809: *Louisa*, a novel in verse, 1782), and also in *The Triumphs of Temper* (1781) of William Hayley (1745-1820). The same traits, together with a blending of German and Italian influences, as well as an extreme pretentiousness, are the outstanding literary features of a group of writers called "The Della Cruscans" (Robert Merry, Mrs. Cowley, etc.), in whose works there is every evidence of the absolute decadence of classical form, aggravated, instead of being corrected, by a false Romanticism.

[3] Robert Burns, born in 1759 near Ayr in Scotland, was the son of a humble farmer; he worked in the fields and received a scanty education; but he reaped the benefit of the literary traditions of his country, and adopted them as his models. His first poems were circulated in manuscript form; in 1786 he published *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, the success of which opened an entrance for him into the fashionable literary circles of Edinburgh. In 1788 he returned to the plough, continued to write lyrical or satirical poems for various collections; then, abandoning the life of a farmer, was appointed "gauger" in the Excise. His premature

what is otherwise the relatively simple evolution of English poetry. The influence of a half-foreign nationality, and the racy vigour of a son of the soil, quicken in him the germ of an unexpected originality. He is an innovator, but not after the manner of his English contemporaries.

The eighteenth century in Scotland sees the development of a literary renascence. The most noteworthy figure after Allan Ramsay,[1] in a long and uninterrupted line of gifted writers, is Robert Fergusson, who died at an early age, leaving part of his work in the original Scots dialect.[2] Burns pondered over and assimilated that tradition and those examples. He felt the exceptional value of a truly instinctive expression, born of experience, and steeped in the direct, sincere quality which words acquire when they are part and parcel of the everyday life of a people. Moreover, in those models he could find the first faint trace or outline of a national art: realism, humour, a lyricism which never loses sight of reality, and whose emotion is barely free from a strain of malice. He has proclaimed his indebtedness to those predecessors. Every historical outlook is wrong but that in which Burns is regarded as heir to their line, the last and greatest of all. But his debt also extends to poetry south of the Border; he read Pope, Thomson, Gray and Young, and found in their school the discipline so necessary to check and direct the spontaneity of his style. A number of his poems are written in normal English; and these are certainly not all of an inferior order, though many are artificial.

It is difficult, therefore, to define exactly the position of Burns as regards the literature of his time. The language he employs is for the most part simple, full of a power of expression that is as yet undiminished; his inspiration, traceable to his immediate environment—country life, nature, love, the scenes and manners of village society—has all the freshness of spon-

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death took place in 1796. *Poetical Works*, ed. Henley and Henderson, 1901; ed. Lang and Craigie, 1896; ed. Wallace, 1902; *Poems Published in 1786*, ed. Cleghorn, 1913. See Angellier, *Burns, la vie et les œuvres*, 1893; Carlyle, "Burns" (*Miscellaneous Essays*), 1854, Lockhart, *Life of Burns* (revised by Douglas, 1882; ed. Douglas, 1914); Shairp, *Burns*, 1879, Stevenson, "Some Aspects of Burns" (*Familiar Studies of Men and Books*), 1882; Elton, *Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830*, vol. i. chap. iv.; MacNaught, *The Truth About Burns*, 1921, Dakers, *Robert Burns, Life and Genius*, 1923; Sir J. Wilson, *The Dialect of Burns*, 1923.

[1] See above, Book II. chap. ii, sect. 9.

[2] Anglo-Scots, a dialect derived from Northern English.

neous creation. And besides, this artistic matter has already
een given definite shape; the Scots dialect is a literary instru-
nent; Burns draws from a wealth of themes and rhythms of a
pecially intense character. Above all, he has the personal gift
of an exceptionally precise, clean style; his mind combines the
clearness which comes of understanding, with the easy turn of
thought and language which is the reward of just and concrete
impressions. From these converging influences is born an art
that is supremely strong and restrained in tone, and which attains
to an absolute purity of form without the least effort. The
example of English classical poetry had probably some share in
that achievement; but the gift which it implies is a natural
product, and all artificial influences had but little to do with it.

The quality of the work of Burns is that of a superior
"classicism," in the æsthetic sense of the term; a classicism which
is independent both of school and of precept, being in itself all-
sufficing. The logic, balance, measure, economy and perfect
propriety of his terms cannot be considered apart from the
straightforward truth which is the soul of his expression.
Dryden at times had this "inevitable" style; but in his force-
fulness there is the suggestion of rhetorical artifice, when com
pared with the simple vigour of that of Burns.

The art of Burns is comprehensive, welcoming and uniting
all sorts of tendencies. This is not to say that it is psy-
chologically neutral; it has as it were its centre of gravity, and
is more an art of the intellect than of the emotions. Yet it is
in close touch with all the human element in life. Compared
with it, the rational poetry of a Pope is dry reading. In the
work of Burns are to be found the inner elements of Romanti-
cism: personal effusion, sensibility, a keen love for nature, a
wealth of imaginative fancy, a sympathetic interest in the poor
and in animals. But he is immune from all feverishness of the
heart or of the head; his moments of absolute melancholy are
few; his soul is healthily robust, too strong to be mortally
wounded by the pangs of life, too sane to be overcome by any
ecstasy.

A manly sense of liberty is the animating force of his geniu
Essentially free-minded, he respects the spiritual kinds of grea
ness, and makes allowance for all other kinds with courtesy
as the case may be, with irony. Burns is deeply aware of

dignity and the equality of men. Before the fall of the Bastille he was by instinct a Republican; after this event he was so in principle and confessedly, even to the point of entering into conflict with those around him; until the day when England was threatened with invasion, and then his patriotism was fired, so that he felt again at one with his friends. His poetry breathes a spirit of irreverence; he spares neither church nor clergy; his independent beliefs do not feel bound by orthodox faith. With an almost Gallic verve he pokes fun at the devil, makes free with the theme of eternal damnation, and laughs at the secret troubles which beset the Puritan conscience. He opposes a good-natured frankness to the outward show of austere demeanour, and maintains that true virtue lies in generosity. His private life, his friendships, his love affairs, his marriage, and his paternal feelings, are all reflected in his poetry, the faithful mirror of an existence which has made a full and open confession of itself.

His work is of a mixed nature. A great part is composed of occasional verse, short poems, mere sketches one might say, jotted down from day to day, in most cases without any great depth of meaning, although the touch of a master is evident; or again, circumstantial poems, lacking in real inspiration. What remains is almost entirely of the first order; whether it be that realistic imaginative verve, so lively and yet so sympathetically human, which evokes the truculence of the Jolly Beggars and the wondrous adventure of Tam o' Shanter; or the still inoffensive mockery which gibes at Doctor Hornbook; or that which penetrates with keener irony the secret grudges harboured up in *Holy Willie's Prayer*, or again, the sterling strength and frankness cast into the ballad form of *John Barleycorn;* or lastly, the fresh and graceful simplicity of the idylls and elegies, where the atmosphere is either one of tenderness or one of sad regret. Nothing could be more varied than Burns's inspiration, destined as it was to spread only over a few fruitful years.

To the foreigner, and even to the uninitiated Englishman, the language of Burns's Scots poems offers some difficulty. The reader finds a glossary indispensable; but when once the linguistic obstacles have been surmounted, the use of dialect will lend greater charm to the work. It breathes a spirit of naïvety, and

at the same time has a strain of lurking slyness; it conjures up a peasant-like atmosphere of shrewd observation and genial good-nature. Such dialectal forms imply and suggest a power of perception which is essentially concrete; they reveal a keen sense of character and of ridicule, while at the same time they have a canniness and an impassibility pregnant with mockery. Not only do they favour the introduction of the humorous element, but they are themselves already part and parcel of humour. Indeed there is nothing more essential to the poetry of Burns than this inborn gift of quiet mirth, of a gaiety which brings with it into almost everything a touch of fine irony; it is the expression and the playful revenge of a personality, which judges life without embittered rancour, and loves it without illusions.

Burns has been as successful with the metre of his poems as with the language. He cannot be termed a creator in this sense, because he has borrowed from his predecessors, and is in no small way indebted to national popular song. The simplest of the metres, and those in which he shows the greatest skill, are of a light, quick movement, whether it be to convey the sprightly thrust of some satirical impulse, or the vigorous notations of the poet's descriptive talent. Many of the best poems are written in the traditional six-lined stanza—four long interlaced with two short—which appears in each instance to end in a pirouette, a sly comment, or the brief avowal of some bestirring emotion.[1]

3. *Blake.*—The psychological secret of moral renovation lies in the loosening of the soul. When its efforts to realise art, truth or virtue have become artificial and sterile through their automatic working, the result of a prolonged strain, it finds a new fecundity by renouncing what have proved to be exhausting and fruitless ambitions; by returning, through simplicity, to its own deeper powers; by resuming contact with the elementary energy of the subconscious. That rule which holds in the case of individuals is no less binding in that of collective minds. English literature at the close of the eighteenth century is preg-

[1] Several talented writers of Scottish verse were the contemporaries of Burns, or came immediately after him. Mention may be made of Lady Nairne (1766-1845), Robert Tannahill (1774-1810), and Sir Alexander Boswell (eldest son of Johnson's biographer, 1775-1822). James Hogg (1770-1835), the shepherd-poet and author of *The Queen's Wake* (1813), etc., occupies a place apart from the others, since his gifts are rather those of the English Romanticists.

nant with a new intuition, which it seeks laboriously to discover by means of a parallel and forced heightening of the tone in style and in feeling. It is then that with Blake, just as with Wordsworth a short time later, an absolute sincerity, a mystic renunciation, the boldness of a self that offers itself in its nakedness, reveal the treasure of a yet untapped spirituality, which, inward and secret as it was, still lay within easy and direct reach; and that literary expression from these fresh sources is rejuvenated and renewed.

If the theory of periodic revivifications in art is something other than a mere suggestive image, its exigencies are still better answered by Blake[1] than by Wordsworth. As a writer he is much less occupied with theory, and shows less self-consciousness; his new departures follow no set programme. No reformer ever was more thoroughly ruled by instinct. This is why in certain directions, and at the very first attempt, he goes farther than Wordsworth. But if he surpasses the latter in the wealth of his prophetic gospel, as in the simple purity of his inspiration, he lacks his sense of balance. For the working out of a literary technique, and the application of a doctrine to the rules which preside over the art of words, what is wanted is a cool judgment. However unique and exceptional the part played by Wordsworth may have been in reality, he is still in our eyes the leader of a

[1] William Blake (1757-1827) was born in London where his father, an Irishman, carried on a small hosiery business. Even during his early years the young Blake showed himself a dreamer and a visionary, he was self-taught, poetry and painting equally attracted him. Apprenticed to an engraver, he studied at the Royal Academy, but gave up the orthodox ways of art, preferring to earn his [illegible] The printing of his [illegible] his wife, [illegible] e *Songs* [illegible]" which [illegible] *Book of* [illegible] is death [illegible] *ur Zoas* (1800?). [illegible] derable *Works*, ed. Ellis and Yeats, 1893; *Poetical Works*, ed. Sampson, 1905, 1913, 1921, [illegible] ed by Sloss [illegible] ed Russel, [illegible] *and Prose* [illegible], new ed. 1906; by A. Symons, 1907, and M. Wilson, 1927; studies by [illegible] (new ed., 1906); Benoit, 1906; Ellis, 1907; P. Berger (*W. Blake, Mysticisme et Poesie*), 1907; Saurat (*Blake and Milton*), 1920, Gardner (*Vision and Vesture*, 1916; *W. Blake, the Man*, 1919), Allardyce Nicoll, 1922; S. F. Damon, *W. Blake, His Philosophy and Symbols*, 1924, O. Burdett, *W. Blake* (English Men of Letters), 1926; M. Plowman, *Introduction to the Study of B.*, 1927, H. C. White, *The Mysticism of W. B.*, 1926.

school. Blake, on the contrary, was and remains a solitary figure.

His extreme originality kept him apart from the general public, and official recognition. Only a small group knew his genius or dimly felt his greatness; and he pursued his indefatigable labour in relative obscurity. Never did a temperament show greater individuality. He felt some influences; but in his mode of thinking, in his imagination, and in his artistic tastes, all his main decisions are solely his own. He invented or re-created for himself all that he set his hand to. His drawings bear the stamp of a characteristic and inimitable vision. His poetry deals in the subtlest kind of symbolism with a skill that cannot be matched. His philosophy is a series of intuitive flights into the realm of the Absolute, soaring with tranquil and imperious assurance; to our minds they are presented as a group of strange, complicated symbols, which to Blake are the clearest, the most familiar realities. His mind works in open defiance of all the normal laws of logic; the language which he speaks, in the latter part of his work, is sometimes unintelligible. His thought, powerfully creative and free from all commonplace forms, has shaken itself loose as well from the most necessary conventions. It moves and has its being on the extreme edge of the thinkable, or even beyond, just as his eager expression will cross the bounds of the inexpressible.

The first poems of Blake, together with lyrical fragments which he wrote at intervals throughout his life, and which are not of a very different nature, form in themselves a realm of poetry apart from every other. It is a domain of purely spontaneous effort, creative through its power of spiritual realisation. The working of an inner light, and mysticism, are already in evidence; but a youthfulness of heart will not allow the poet to entertain their exuberant fancies; the predominant, almost exclusive theme of his poetry is the feelings of a child's impassioned soul; and the natural tone of its language is a moving simplicity, while its emotions possess a pure ardour. The essence of Romanticism is here in these short poems, whether the main subject be love and happiness, as in the *Poetical Sketches* and the *Songs of Innocence*, or the note of grief and rebellion against a world given over to evil be more pronounced, as in the *Songs of Experience*. The universe here is seen through the eyes of a child,



*Decoration by William Blake for his "Songs of Innocence and of Experience"
From an original copy in the Metropolitan Museum.*

felt through its senses, judged through its heart; and this child is the symbol of the most delicate and courageous intuitions in the human mind, just like the soul of a peasant in those moments of sober exaltation which will be to Wordsworth the very source and inner substance of poetry. The elements of Romanticism are present, either actually or potentially; some—such as the sense of wonder, the contemplation of nature through fresh eyes, an intimate sympathy with the varieties of existence most distant from the reach of our clear intelligence—whatever belongs, in one word, to a sensibility suffused with imagination—are found to the highest degree; others, such as the obsession of the past or the absorbing sense of self, in a much lesser degree. There is even at times a hint of namby-pambiness, but that puerility is no less strong than it is graceful; the clear eyes which questioningly look at nature, animals and man, are endowed with a singular acuity of vision. Still, everything they see is bathed in a halo of mystery and beauty; there radiates from them meek pity no less than a holy anger. Blake's first style is in a way a juvenile form of Romanticism; and in those early songs English poetry, without being conscious of it, thoroughly undergoes the miraculous process of its rejuvenation.

Here the words welded together by a pure inspiration are as smoothly joined as the molecules in a flowing stream; they are perfectly adapted to the thought because they are as simple as possible, and the thought is itself simple. They do not strive after elegance, and yet they achieve it by means of their perfect adaptation. They do not aim at being intense, and yet are expressive because they are still soaked in the feeling from which they sprang. They have the cadenced flow of natural music, each word joining the next in a rhythm whose measure is indistinguishable from the accent of the words, or from the modulation of the phrase. Here is the melody, somewhat thin but supremely spontaneous, of the soul in its moments of emotion. In the poetry of Blake the dried-up spring of Elizabethan lyricism may be said to well up again.[1]

These first poems, however, are not all of an equal quality. They are not free from prosaic touches; jarring or weak notes

[1] The fragment, *Edward the Third* (*Poetical Sketches*), is very unequal, but has pages which recall in a striking fashion the best qualities of the Elizabethan dramatic style.

are heard, traceable to the over-impatient ardour of the poet. Here and there a painful feverishness invades and disturbs the quiet effusion of the thought. The "Prophetic Books" are the work of an unruly genius, of a mature thinker whose presence makes the artist in Blake still greater, but who changes the exquisite poet into an excited visionary.

The doctrine of Blake is a confused assemblage of desires and impulses; it may be likened to a vast gospel of liberty. In its daring outlook upon everything it embraces all the political ideas of the French Revolution, with their social consequences; and even goes as far as the vague unlimited vistas of anarchic individualism, of free mysticism and of the modern criticism of moral values. All settled criteria and faiths are there upset at a single stroke. Whether it be the orthodox religion of Christ, or the traditional notions of good and evil, or again, rational and scientific beliefs, the same revolutionary spirit reverses the previous order of things with undoubting enthusiasm. On one hand, it reaches and even passes the religion of a Swedenborg and the unbending postulates of the mystics of the Puritan Republic; on the other, it foretells all the work of liberation by which contemporary psychology has endeavoured to overthrow the control of moral prohibition and repression. Blake is the prince of spiritual revolt; but his doctrinal ideas, harbouring within the confines of his own consciousness, and only perceptible in the pages of his magnificent though obscure work, have wielded no influence; they linger in literature like some hidden explosive force, and only reveal their inner meaning to the immune minds of scholarly adepts. England, at the time when she was bent upon a policy hostile to the French Revolution, did not even know of that vehement and sweeping denial of all her cherished idols.

A manifold and yet coherent symbolism expresses these ideas, uniting them and at the same time emphasising their relationship one with another. The mythical vision of Blake creates an original cosmogony; the metaphysical or religious concepts are imbued with life, given a form, and clothed in a kind of gigantic humanity which recalls to mind the imaginative creations of Michael Angelo and Dante. These personages, once become the familiar guests of his thought, live, meet, or oppose each other in the far-stretching fields of time and space, and the

destiny of the spheres depends on their cosmic interplay. The artist, the seer, spellbound by symbolical images, and the thinker haunted by intellectual entities, are now one and the same person; the work of Blake, a maze of intermingling forms and ideas, is little else than an apocalypse, a realm of darkness peopled by supernatural beings, where one and the same idea develops throughout a continued series of signs and conventional equivalents, but where any attempt at a precise interpretation would be hazardous. Only perhaps in some of the creations of Hugo would it be possible for a Frenchman to glean an idea of the strange world of Blake's symbolic thought.

It cannot be said that Blake in the "Prophetic Books" conforms to any of the normal conditions of literary or picturesque expression. To find a close connectedness between the successive terms is well-nigh impossible. The style has often a biblical grandeur; the rhythm of the verse is ample, free, rugged, but sometimes instinct with unequalled majesty; and magnificent intervals are scattered through vast stretches of arid or obscure vaticination. The voice of the poet is still to be heard in passages of powerful evocation, just as his touch can be seen in frescoes whose broad sweep is as vast as the mind of the visionary who by now has taken his place. But his language, to be understood, demands a sight practised and trained in deciphering it; and for a century the "Prophetic Books"—whose full wealth of content was revealed only at a recent date—have had no influence except on a small group of faithful admirers.

To be consulted: Angellier, *Burns*, 1893; Beers, *History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, 1899; Berger, *W. Blake*, 1907; Cambridge *History of English Literature*, vol. x, chaps. vi and vii, vol. xi chaps. [illegible]; O. Elton, *A Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830*, vol. i 2nd ed. [illegible]; Hugh Walker, *Three Centuries of Scottish Literature*, 1893.

BOOK V

THE ROMANTIC PERIOD (1798-1832)

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST GENERATION OF POETS

1. *Romanticism in Itself, and in Its Relation to Society; the Two Phases.*—The first thirty years of the nineteenth century form a natural period. Certain characteristics, which have long been growing more definite, now acquire an extreme intensity. We witness the realisation in all its plenitude of a type of emotional and imaginative literature that has escaped from the constraining forces of sovereign Reason, as even from those incorporated in the expression itself. This consummation is brought about by an inner progress, but at the same time it is favoured by the general influences of the social and moral surroundings.

After the great upheaval caused by the transformation of industry, after the religious awakening of Methodism and evangelism, the decisive shock to thought comes with the French Revolution. It is legitimate enough to date, as is often done, the beginning of the new age in literature from the publication of the anonymous work which united the young talents of Wordsworth and Coleridge (1798). With the one as with the other, the ardour of a generosity which may change its object, but never changes its nature, is the main origin of the poetic idealism; and the revolutionary faith which had hitherto animated them is the source of their artistic and human vocation. They are indebted to it for the assurance and authority of their doctrine, for what establishes them as the long expected theorists and prophets.

The spiritual quality of the eminent poets who thus appear on the very threshold of English Romanticism helps us to gain some ideas as to its inner nature and the mental forces governing it. Romanticism can be defined only in terms of pure psychology. Any other formula alters or limits arbitrarily its very essence.

English Romanticism is not one artistic principle in conflict another. If Wordsworth and Coleridge do share for a moment a controversial doctrine, their agreement very ly gives way before their temperamental differences; and of the writers whom posterity classes with them or among immediate successors follows their example on this point. anticism in England is much less clearly than in France the nation of an innovatory æsthetic creed, as opposed to an dox art. English literature, of a less codified and discid nature than that of France, was less subservient to an cit system of rules which had been, so to speak, officially tered by enlightened opinion, incorporated in manners, ved by learned bodies and upheld by an Academy. The al public in England is in no way impassioned over the els of different schools; indeed a battle such as that fought Hugo's drama, *Hernani*, is unknown in that country. A ype of poetic creation, which for long has been in a state scure growth, now takes definite shape in certain pro-ed traits, and declares its independence towards the past a superior distinctness, which tends to become aggressive. he initiative shown by Wordsworth is merely an episode—h of a very full significance—in a whole movement which sides is of even broader importance. And if one examines the conscious principles at issue, one is forced to admit the nce of embarrassing exceptions. The cult of former values, hat of Pope, are still to be found in Byron; while the effort eats and Shelley is directed along lines which have little in ion with the doctrine of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

nglish Romanticism does not consist in the triumph of ." The personality of the writer has a characteristic place because sensibility and imagination are of the very essence dividuality, whilst intelligence tends to the general. Every-considered, classicism laid stress upon the impersonal ts of the life of the mind; the new literature, on the other openly shifts the centre of art, bringing it back towards is most proper and particular in each individual. This is sequence, and not an initial cause.

or does English Romanticism primarily consist in a return ational tradition, although in a real and deep sense it is that thing. The idea of restoring the broken continuity of a

formerly normal inspiration, which the attraction of a differ art—an attraction enhanced by the spontaneous transformat in taste—had dried at its source, is only partially and at intervals present in the conscious thought of those poets who real it. And when they do dream of reanimating the past, it is n altogether for its national and familiar quality, but on accou of its intrinsic virtues, and of the moral attributes they s in it.

This is equivalent to saying, on the other hand, that Englis Romanticism is not the outcome of foreign influences eithe The part played by such a contagion, at this date, is much les significant in England than in France. The stimulating effect o certain themes which have emanated from Germany, or of which Germany supplied the most typical forms, is a recognisable but secondary force in the development of literature from 1790 to 1830.[1]

English Romanticism, in itself, is the active reawakening, in the larger number of writers, of a creative impulse of a type formerly current, which for many years had tended to become rare, and almost to disappear; but which during the last fifty years, in fact, had shown signs of a growing revival. To speak in this connection of sensibility and imagination as two distinct faculties would be misleading; what one has to realise is the intimate fusion, the close reciprocal dependence of these two inner activities. The Romantic spirit can be defined as an accentuated predominance of emotional life, provoked or directed by the exercise of imaginative vision, and in its turn stimulating or directing such exercise. Intense emotion coupled with an intense display of imagery, such is the frame of mind which supports and feeds the new literature. The works of art which give the epoch its distinct character spring from a creative effort which has been prompted through the exaltation of these two groups of tendencies. One of the two groups, no doubt, may be dominant in relation to the other; but as a rule they function as one, and in too compact a way to permit of analysis. The rather

[1] See below the bibliographical notes on Coleridge and Scott; and for an outline of the whole subject, E. Margraf, *Der Einfluss der deutschen Litteratur auf die glishche am Ende des achtzehnten und im ersten Drittel des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1901; A. C. Bradley, *English Poetry and German Philosophy in the Age Wordsworth* (Manchester, 1909); J. M. Carré, *Goethe en Angleterre*, 1920; M. Price, *Enblish-German Literary Influences*, 1920; F. W. Stokoe, *German uence in the English Romantic Period, 1788-1818*, 1926.

primitive or derived part of emotion or imagery offers an interesting but difficult problem, the solution of which in each particular case does not affect the value of the general interpretation here put forth.

This interpretation enables us to include and to connect together all those works customarily acknowledged as Romantic. No other, it seems, would permit us to include them all.

It goes without saying that a formula of this kind does not exhaust the special properties of Romanticism as we have it in 1820; it does not do justice to all that is particular and unique in this phase of the English moral rhythm. If epochs in literature are by their origin, and in their very substance, psychological moments, and if these moments obey a law of alternation which after a while brings them back, there remains to be defined in the case of each of them the subtle characteristics which give it its individual figure among the similar periods.

The Elizabethan age had already been essentially an age of Romanticism. What are the traits which distinguish the later Romanticism from the earlier? In the first place there are delicate differences due to the immediate happenings and to near historical influences. No one beating of the moral rhythm ever completely resembles another, be it for the reason that history never entirely repeats itself. The French Revolution, for instance, is a unique event.

But the capital difference is of a more inner nature. The history of thought is less apt to repeat itself than any other sequence: the reason is that a new state of the mind could not possibly be identical with a former one which it recalls, since it adds to it the continuous experience gained in the interval of time, an experience inscribed in the very perception of its intrinsic newness. *The looked-for difference lies precisely in this, that the* Romanticism of 1820 knows and feels itself to be a second period of its kind, and not the first. Its consciousness of itself is spontaneously turned to the past; it is wholly permeated with an aspiration which exalts it: a zealous impulse carrying it towards earlier forms of existence. It is, so to say, under the haunting influence of feelings already experienced, of a moral life which has *formerly* been lived, and which memory would fain recapture. This subtle impression of regret mingled with the joy of a discovery, this recognition of a land at once strange and

familiar, where the heart finds itself at home, as it proceeds to explore it, impregnates all the fibres of English Romanticism; and the same spirit is perceptible in French Romanticism, although no doubt in a lesser degree.

And it is much rather through a probing deeper into the self, than through the exercise of pure imagination, that the heart's desire is attained. A feeling of nostalgic strangeness is essential to this literature, because consciousness is in quest of a certain mood which is a thing of the past, and because in an obscure way it grasps the reality of the mood, and not a mere image. By an effort of spiritual will-power and intuition this form of life can be retrieved from its dormant state, and restored to the plenitude of being. Just as individual memory is a latent persistence of the thing remembered, so Romanticism was ever present in the background of the classical spirit. Its resurrection is really in the nature of an awakening.

Thus the "wonder" of the Romanticists is the enthralling discovery, the progressive lighting-up of an inner horizon, which extends beyond the limits of clear consciousness; it is the perception of objects in the magic garb with which our fresher vision invested them of yore, and which our tired eyes had forgotten. The obsession of distant centuries is the mysterious attraction of strong modes of feeling of which the collective memory has preserved a confused recollection, and which it naturally associates with remote phases of its experience. These tendencies in the Romanticism of 1820 are not mere elements of chance and accident, but inevitable and constitutive characteristics.[1]

Such is, in its broad lines, the psychological attitude of the writers; but the case is different with the general public.

[1] The elementary fact of memory is accepted by our instinct as simple; it awakens, however, and naturally enough, an impression of strangeness. The domain of remembrances is the favourite realm of mystery. The slightest unbalancing of this function results in a deep disturbance of consciousness. Everyone knows the very particular value which with modern writers is attached to the "paramnesia," or illusion of false recognition (which might be, as Bergson would have it, the pure reappearance of a past state). It plays a prominent part with the English Romantic poets.—It *seems certain*, that if Romanticism is bathed in an atmosphere of wonder, this is not only because the imagination, for so long repressed, now fully indulges itself, and at once seeks its satisfaction in the wonderful. All that Romantic writers imagine and feel is accompanied by a shade of wonder, because they see those emotions and those images rise within themselves with a surprising *spontaneousness*, and because all such imaginings, in spite of their novelty, bring with them a disturbing impression of an intimacy of old date. Romanticism is as a whole, in this respect, a phenomenon of collective "paramnesia," the reviviscence of a subconscious personality.

No doubt, there exists a moral attitude common to the artists, to such at least as reflect the character of the age. This attitude is called forth and encouraged, broadly speaking, by the circumstances of the mental environment. It is very far, however, from standing in a simple relation to this environment; from receiving only favourable impulses; or from representing the actual tone of this environment, save by a distant approximation.

At the time when Romanticism definitively makes its appearance, no sudden break is revealed in the movement of minds. As is ever the case, the passage from one epoch to another is effected by a silent and gradual transition. But moreover, it *would be erroneous to believe that the Romantic period is* marked by a general and common exaltation of souls. If one looks at society as a whole, this period does not coincide with a phase of exuberance, but rather with one of unrest and of a secret want of balance. There is no noticeable increase in the public cult of emotion; indeed, in certain respects, it would rather appear to be decreasing. Outwardly, at least, the sentimentalism inherited from the preceding age is contradicted by the elegant or cynical scepticism of contemporary manners. The court and the aristocracy, despite official decorum, set the example of loose frivolity. The English Regency recalls, after the lapse of a hundred years, that of the eighteenth century in France. The bulk of the nation, however, pursues the task of *industrial and commercial expansion; its practical standard is* that of a utilitarianism which daily becomes more clearly defined. The *mal du siècle* does not possess in England the character of an almost universal epidemic; in its serious form, it only affects exceptional types; while in the average circles of cultivated society it only assumes the benign form of a moral disquietude, to which the unsettled condition of the political world contributes as much *as if not more than the instability in the moral life* itself.

The full completion of a new literature is here therefore a delayed effect; or rather an organic and complex phenomenon, the fruit of a long preparation, in which the distant past plays a part not less important than that of the recent past or of present circumstances. *The state of society from 1800 to 1830* is as unable to provide an explanation of Romanticism, as it is on the

other hand able to throw light on the detail, the accidents and even the internal divisions of the movement.

For in the sphere of politics, this period has a strongly marked and clear outline, the relation of which to the course of literature is as definite as it is simple. English Romanticism is not a homogeneous group of tendencies and writers. One must distinguish in it two successive generations, the limit of which would roughly coincide with the final downfall of Napoleon. Until about 1815, England is concentrated in a national effort to combat the France of Revolutionary and Imperial times. This contracting of interests stirs it to a fuller sense of its own traditions, while making it impervious to the direct radiation of the Revolutionary ideal. The first Romanticism, therefore, puts itself forth as a reaction against this ideal. The feelings, instincts and imagination which it brings into play, and which it exploits with audacious freedom, are linked up by it with the permanent fund of British originality.

The mysticism upon which the poetical reform of Wordsworth and Coleridge is based thus seeks its justification and its encouraging precedents in a national idealism, where a sympathetic interest in the poor enters as an element, but where there is no place for a foreign gospel of the rights of man. And this sympathy is justified, according to these writers, by the moral dignity of a peasant race attached to the soil for years, whose spirit goes back, beyond the century of Reason and enlightenment, to the faith and patriotism of bygone ages. In the literary field, the Lake poets claim as their authority the examples of the Elizabethan Renascence; in the social sphere, they lay stress on the noble simplicity of a class in which traditional virtues are still lingering. It is in this light that they view their relationship—which is wholly one of hostility and defence—with the great political turmoil, the shock of which has never, in fact, ceased to produce a fecund bestirring in their souls.

About 1815, the situation is reversed. The Tory reaction has no longer any object; or if it outlives its original purpose, it must divest itself of the garb of disinterestedness with which the threatened security of a common patrimony had invested it. On the other hand, some economic and political forces are telling with added vigour in favour of an impatient liberalism. The middle-class business people and the citizens of the great indus-

trial centres de[illegible] The victorious [illegible] impoverished, [illegible] The financial and agricultural *crisis neutralises the effect of commercial prosperity.* Stimulated by these facts, the offensive *waged by agitators and philosophers alike against an oligarchic* régime becomes fiercer than ever, while the selfish system of the "Holy Alliance" *in Europe is now faced with the growing hostility* of the peoples.

In an atmosphere such as this, *the second generation of* Romanticists breathes a spirit of moral revolt. Without abjur*ing* the authority *in art of the Elizabethan models, it refuses to* recognize any prestige in tradition itself, and severely criticises a present that is *overruled by the fear of progress, as by conventional* privileges and lies. By way of direct transmission or *derived influence, this generation receives the heritage of revo*lutionary thought; it links up the impassioned intensity of its *psychological tone with ideas of liberty and rebellion, with* a keen determination to secure independence and realise justice, *and with an exclusive cult of the beautiful. It is innovatory,* critical, and readily places itself outside the pale of common *obligations.*

The writers of the first group, even if they run counter to *the orthodox habits of language and style, are nevertheless in* moral harmony with a large majority of the public. They out*distance their contemporaries by the fullness of their spiritual* life, but are not in a state of open conflict with them. The *Romanticism of the Lake poets is a kind of purification and* deepening of normal existence; it fronts society as an example and *permanent solicitation. It takes its stand upon* the emotions that are common to all, and only seeks, by stimulating them, to *idealise them into poetry. The second generation, on the* contrary, sets up a decided opposition between the artist and his *surroundings. It carries the* ardour *of feeling and* imagination to a degree at which the average temperament would seem to *perceive an excess threatening* the balance of personality; and at the same time, it raises against the established order of things a *manifold protestation instinct with* generous passion, haughty sarcasm or æsthetic detachment. Thus Romanticism becomes a *literature of social conflict. It appeals to* the vital forces of the

soul against the rule of interests and cold calculation; it attracts to its banners the zealous and the young, but not without provoking the hostility of the average man.

In a parallel but different plane, meanwhile, the theorists of philosophical radicalism are actively pursuing a somewhat similar aim; but they employ a language that is more intelligible, while their reasoning stops far short of the enthusiasm or the irony of the poets. Despite this accord with an intellectual movement destined at least to a partial success, the Romanticism of 1820 deviates from the conditions necessary to ensure the durability of an artistic phase; it exceeds the average powers of the public. Born of a long psychological development, and transposing, as it does, into the domain of art an agitation, an emotional bestirring which society was determined to put an end to, it requires from all minds a sympathy which only a morally liberated élite could grant it.

At a very early stage, therefore, it was severed from the only roots that could nourish it. The literature of a small number, it never became really popular. To be more widely accepted, it had to wait until a reactionary movement towards balance had set in against it; and until with the evidence of its decline there was effaced the danger with which it had seemed to threaten society—a society which above all desired to live.

2. *Wordsworth.*—Wordsworth's [1] creative originality among

[1] William Wordsworth, born in 1770 in the Lake district, came of a lower middle-class family, and after a rather hard life as a boy, studied at Cambridge (1787-91), spent a vacation holiday in the Alps (1790), then resided for 13 months in Orleans, Blois, etc. (1791-92); here he was won over to the cause of the French Revolution. On his return to England, the Reign of Terror, the state of war with France, and the trouble felt in his soul by his passion for a young French girl, Annette Vallon, whose daughter he recognised but whom he believed he could not marry, all plunged him into a fit of pessimism, which his adhesion to the intellectual theses of Godwin failed to alleviate. He published poems (*Descriptive Sketches, An Evening Walk*, 1793), wrote a tragedy (*The Borderers*). Retirement in the heart of nature, and the sympathy of his sister Dorothy, brought moral healing, which in turn led to a surer conviction of his poetic vocation. A friend of Coleridge, he was influenced by the latter's mystic idealism, which he turned to a rather moral and human faith. The two worked out the literary doctrine of which the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) were the anonymous manifesto (enlarged editions, 1800, 1802, etc.). At the same time Wordsworth drew up the plan of a great philosophical poem, *The Recluse* (unfinished); he wrote fragments of it, such as *The Prelude* (from 1798 to 1805; published in 1850), and *The Excursion* (1814). After a visit to Germany, he settled in the Lake district, at Grasmere, then at Rydal Mount. His inspiration, less fertile than before, created poems of an accent generally more moralising, where expression was given to a political, social, and religious teaching of a definitely conservative character. He published *The White Doe of Rylstone*, 1815; *Peter Bell*, 1819; *The River Duddon*, 1820; *Ecclesiastical*

English poets remains closely linked to his intimate contact with the revolutionary faith. A spiritual bond was thus formed never to be broken. The enthusiasm for the fraternity of mankind played the very part in his life that religious conversion has done on English soil towards the formation of so many active souls. From this glow was kindled the flame of an idealism which varied much in its expression, and even seemed to belie itself in belying its first forms, before it declined with age. But it was never completely extinguished, preserving as it did until the end a radiating power that was still effective. And although he had become the adversary of all reform, Wordsworth remained none the less the apostle which the Revolution had made him. It is of little consequence that his poetic vocation and art should have developed after the disappointment of his social hopes, and as a reaction against them. The essential initiative which he then takes in the order of art implies an inner certitude, a clearness of vision, which English poetry had been expecting for half a century, and which a writer could find only in the regenerating power of a great faith. In order to renew so thoroughly the inspiration and language of poetry, to destroy an imperious tradition and to break a spell, the utmost moral courage was required. Blake had possessed this courage, which he owed to his mysticism; but he was not fully aware of what he did. Wordsworth has this knowledge, and the more certainly, as his literary reform is connected by a close analogy with his recent political zeal. It is impossible not to see that the doctrine of the *Lyrical Ballads* is an æsthetic application of sentimental democracy.

In this collection of verse, where the contribution of Wordsworth is much greater than that of Coleridge, and in the shorter poems of the following period (1798-1805), the new poetry

Sketches, 1822; a collection of his *Sonnets*, 1838, etc. A profitable sinecure (1813), honours, popularity, had by now all come his way; elected to the Laureateship in 1843, he died in 1850. *Poetical Works*, ed by Hutchinson, 1904; *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. by Littledale, 1911; *Prelude*, ed. by de Selincourt, 1926; *Prose Works*, ed by Knight, 1896; *Prefaces and Essays*, ed by George, 1892; the *Journals* of Dorothy Wordsworth were edited by Knight in 1897; *Selections*, ed. by Ham. Thompson, 1918. See studies by Myers (English Men of Letters, 1881), Herford (*Age of Wordsworth*), 1897, Magnus (*Primer of Wordsworth*), 1897; Raleigh, 1903; Punch, 1907; Legouis (*Jeunesse de Wordsworth*), 1897, idem, *William W. and Annette Vallon*, 1922; Cestre (*Révolution Française et poètes anglais*), 1906; Barstow (*W.'s Theory of Poetic Diction*), 1917; Harper (*W. W., His Life, Works and Influence*), 1916; H. W. Garrod, 1923.

presents itself under varying forms, but all animated by persisting intentions. One feels that it has been prepared by a painstaking effort of critical thought, upon which successive prefaces and the disquisitions of Coleridge (*Biographia Literaria*) had thrown a strong light. Both poets are above all concerned with psychology. Carrying to its utmost limit the preoccupation which is already to be recognised in the work of their predecessors, from Cowper to Blake, they deliberately make the human soul the centre of art. In a sense, classicism had exactly the same intention; it also found its favourite subject-matter in the study of the mind. But the perception of what appertains to consciousness becomes with the Romanticists a much more vital and supple process; and this more direct hold which the writer's self now possesses upon its own working, a hold due to the intuitive quality of an inner life that has been stimulated by the revival of imaginative emotion, constitutes the principle as well as the originality of a transformed literature. So predominant is this psychological curiosity, that Wordsworth—his own statements would bear witness to the fact—seems rather to be in search of truth than of poetry. Behind this scientific taste, however, there is revealed a deeper motive, the desire for such an experience as will be profitable to both feelings and conduct. The *Lyrical Ballads* and the poems of the same group are a series of moral analyses, of a rich intrinsic value, discreetly guided by an edifying and utilitarian purpose.

The occasion for these analytical studies is provided by the everyday life, not of the elegant and refined classes, but of the people, and above all of the peasants. Wordsworth's realism is a complex product in which, along with the desire for truth, a love of Nature and simplicity, and a reaction against false nobleness, commingle with a social faith in the dignity of the humblest lives. Here we recognise both his own memories of childhood, and the lasting influence of his Revolutionary years. This realism, as often happens, is therefore pregnant with a virtual idealism, and is only a concentrated method employed to strike out, through sober means, spiritual beauty from fresh sources. And not only is the rustic austerity of the subjects wholly lit up by the brilliancy which a meditative mind imparts to whatever it touches, but in addition a halo of strangeness and mystery comes to glorify it. In the obscure stirrings of consciousness is hidden

a subtle artistic element, which the poet can turn to use for the most moving of effects. In accordance with the sharing of their common task, Wordsworth takes familiar reality as the object of his study, exalting it through the strength of a reflective sensibility; Coleridge chooses the supernatural as his theme, and sets out to invest it with the semblance of truth as with the power to appeal to our feelings. By these inverse methods, the two writers tend towards the same end, the intimate fusion of the real with the ideal; and the bond which unites these elements is here none other than the new perception of the possibilities of "wonderment" to be found in the simplest things—a discovery the germ of which Wordsworth owed to the inward concentration of his thought upon itself, and Coleridge to his philosophical meditations and, later, to German transcendalism; but which also could have been encouraged by the example which the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe afforded of a supernaturalness that was of a wholly inner nature.

Thus the short tales of Wordsworth tend to stir up the emotions of a soul which opens itself freely to the mysterious reverberating echo of the simplest lessons of life. Suggestion is the real aim of this poetry, and the means it employs are at bottom of the same order as those which symbolism will utilise at a later date. In appearance, this poetry is summed up in an exact faithfulness to reality. With uncompromising bluntness in the *Lyrical Ballads*—a manner that tends to soften later—it throws up in a full light the meaner traits of a suffering humanity. Man is shown by it in the setting of Nature, in strict accordance with daily observation, and without a trace of exaggeration or embellishment. As it is deeply alive to Nature's influence upon man, there emanates from its brief and sober pictures a teaching of all the inexpressible lessons which the sky and the earth, the seasons and all living creatures, convey to a sensibility upright and sound enough to remain receptive. The very first poems of Wordsworth (*Descriptive Sketches, etc.*), had borne testimony to the wealth of his sensory notations; and from the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* he draws upon these resources, which he uses with a severe self-command, for much more powerful effects.

Psychological intensity—the vibration of our consciousness in its contact with things—is a relative quantity, and one which depends in a large measure upon ourselves. The deeper the

attention we bring to bear upon facts, the richer will be our feelings in connection with them; and it is to this depth of attention that Wordsworth would incite us. He constantly reminds us that nothing is indifferent to him who is able to see and feel. In the unlimited store of experience at his disposal, his choice, from a preference of the mind as well as of the heart, falls upon that in which the humblest humanity is laid bare; for the emotion which has its source in it is freer from all conventional alloy, and possesses at the same time a power of more moving appeal. His poems place themselves, and us, in a state of sensitive receptivity before the simple incidents of rural life. Meditation, tenderness, a philosophical and serious beauty, are born of the vast widening of the soul's horizon, brought about by a moral shock which is in itself of no significance, but proceeds to grow and idealise itself. Never did poetry more nearly approach a character of pure spirituality. As for the properly sensual value of art, it has no place here.

Being thus a collection of those intense and chosen moods which the world stirs in an attentive mind, whose imagination and reflection work up the rough data of sensibility, the poetry of Wordsworth searched, as it were, after a suitable form in which to express itself. And such a form it found by instinct, but was unable at once to define. One must not interpret too literally the successive formulæ which Wordsworth puts forward for his poetic diction. The first goes beyond his thought; he never seriously believed that a poet's means of expression should coincide altogether with those of the most familiar speech. To him the *Lyrical Ballads* are little else than experiments, in which a new principle is applied with a vigour meant to remain exceptional. He has a very exact intuition of this principle, even if he gives it definite shape only by degrees. It is not to identify entirely the language of poetry with that of conversation among men of the people or of the middle class; but that one should put the language of every day, that is to say the living and real language, to contribution for such elements as are most fitting towards the artistic suggestion one has in view. What will these elements be? They will be of a kind which the sincere and direct ardour of the need of expression spontaneously turns to use. They are words of *intense forcefulness*, corresponding to intense states of consciousness; but their intensity is of a wholly

inner character, so that their distinctive feature is simplicity. *Herein lies the truth* at the core of the doctrine. Thus the theory of style again joins up with the moral and social idealism, and with the mysticism of Nature; the elementary powers of *being* are subjacent, and therefore preferable, to the artificial products of intelligence; in every sense, it is through simplicity that one returns to actual depth.

The poetry of Wordsworth is based upon an effort to convey by simple means the impression of intensity. But the use of ordinary words does not suffice to create this impression; one thing more is necessary, namely, the deep-felt tone which reveals their hidden tension, and brings into play their power of virtual suggestion. Music is possessed of adequate means by which the proper tone may be indicated; Wordsworth makes up for them to a certain extent, thanks to the help of auxiliary devices: the presumption created by the choice of verse as a medium, the prestige of poetry, the rhythm, and the effect of pieces which shed light on one another, and thus afford the reader a clue. He has *also to allow for certain turns and expressions of a revealing* nature, which imply by their very irregularity a superior degree of emotional tension, and the effect of which is to throw the *whole tenor of the style on to the plane of full-meant intention* and subdued eloquence.

On the other hand, literary tradition offers a model to the innovators. *In the Romanticism of Wordsworth and Coleridge* there is the consciousness and the will of a return to national sources. The disease that is preying upon poetry is the artificiality of a language in which the external and explicit means of conveying intensity have been worn out by the deadening effect of custom, and have lost all their power of suggestion; so that they crush inspiration itself and paralyse all effort towards a renewal of art. To shake off these chains, to dare to employ the language of pure passion, that is to say, to seek the vigour of words only in the force of their emotional note, such a step will mean a return to the practice of the old masters. The terms they employed had not yet suffered from constant use; therefore they could be satisfied with a moderate degree of outward intensity; and their style, when compared with that of the eighteenth century at its close, is of a relatively simple quality, just as it is ever racy, frank and spontaneous.

The cult of Chaucer, Spenser and Shakespeare is part and parcel of the faith animating the literary reform, of which the *Lyrical Ballads* are the symbol as much as the instrument. To the pages of these writers Wordsworth and Coleridge go in quest of materials for the making of a "permanent" style. The ballad was the most popular form of literature, and the most robust in its construction; since the appearance of Percy's collection, the Romantic ideal had crystallized round these themes and these rhythms, that are still pregnant with the old-time vigour of the English genius. And it is of his own free choice that Wordsworth links up his subtle, powerful and meditative evocation with their simple pathos.

The significance of his attempt transcends its artistic success, which is at best a partial one. Although unequal, and full of flaws, of lapses into the prosaic or into a tedious accuracy of statement, each time that the inner magnetism is broken, that a sufficiently intense radiation of spiritual energy no longer transfigures what is mediocre into something beautiful, his shorter poems of the best period undoubtedly possess a unique value, however mixed they may be. Among them are pure masterpieces, in which the tension of the style is delightfully relaxed; an ecstatic or divinely puerile spontaneousness, as in Blake, here replaces the effort of concentration; depth of feeling can no more be distinguished from a blithe spirit or from the most delicate simplicity. The effort of philosophical sincerity becomes idealised into lyricism. But whatever the charm of these effusions, it is chiefly through their boldness that they have been fruitful. They bring to a decisive realisation the revival towards which all the previous literary transition was tending; they adapt a new or renewed form to a novel inspiration. The direct influence of Wordsworth acts perceptibly on very few writers; but he had broken the spell of an antiquated tradition, and his work inaugurated the reign of liberty. England awoke to this fact, not indeed at once, but by degrees, and in the course of a generation. All the English poets of the nineteenth century are indirectly his heirs.

The poet in Wordsworth is not always bound up with the reformer. At times we find him escaping, so to speak, from the more narrow scope of his programme, not by way of an awkward literality, due to a momentary failing of emotion, but

through a lyrical exuberance which carries his expression far above the level of ordinary life. His *Tintern Abbey*, his *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, voice inner moods of so ardent and rare a quality that they isolate the poet from his average fellow-men, and give him a language that is in itself, and not only in single terms, superior to that of normal experience. In its extreme application, the theory of an impassioned simplicity terminates in explicit sublimity; and when once the soul is pitched in this key, the words which are naturally suitable are by no means simple words. But the expression is not conventional on that account. In these poems Wordsworth does not violate the true principle of his doctrine; he merely frees it from the accidental limits imposed upon it by a legitimate reaction against an opposite excess; and so, beyond the Romanticism that must of necessity triumph, he rediscovers the highest art in a perfect harmony of thought and form.

The greater part of *The Prelude*, and the finest passages of *The Excursion*, realise this harmony through a remarkable blending of poetry and doctrine. In a language compact and often technical, where Hartley's influence is perceptible, just as that of Milton reveals itself in the blank verse arranged in long paragraphs, we have the propounding of a whole philosophy, which tends to be drily argumentative, without actually becoming so. For through these pages wafts an invigorating freshness, coming for the most part from free Nature, the presence of which, be it gentle, calm, austere or grand, yet ever wholesome, bathes the very inspiration of Wordsworth.

To him Nature appears as a formative influence superior to any other, the educator of senses and mind alike, the sower in our hearts of the deep-laid seeds of our feelings and beliefs. It speaks to the child in the fleeting emotions of its early years, and stirs the young poet to an ecstasy, the glow of which illuminates all his work and the rest of his life. In our temperate climes, this Nature is a safe guide to wisdom and goodness; it is instinct with the irradiating presence of the divine; in his adoration of it, Wordsworth's creed is a mystical pantheism. Besides Nature, the concrete humanity of the humble, of those who live in contact with it, is a source of happy exaltation for the social philosophy of the poet; as also the enthusiasm for science, the intellectual religion of truth, which Wordsworth possesses without

effort and without uneasiness, for he does not deem it possible that truth may be contrary to his moral optimism. Finally, a note of personal tenderness, an almost elegiac inclination to evoke the memories of his own childhood, makes *The Prelude* the most admirable record of a soul's progress towards the full possession of self, which is implied in the apostolate of a poetic calling. The acuteness of the analyses which Wordsworth has thus given of subtle facts, and clothed in a language now expressive, now more abstract, has been equalled only by the present-day study of the mind.

The second part of his career reveals an inspiration on the wane, a didactic purpose that grows too prominent, a petty concern for an orthodox fidelity to order. He has still moments of beautiful, grand utterance, as in his *Sonnets*, which rank among the most robust in the English language; he retains to the end his nobility of thought and of form. But all that is exceptionally original in him belongs to the period of his first maturity.

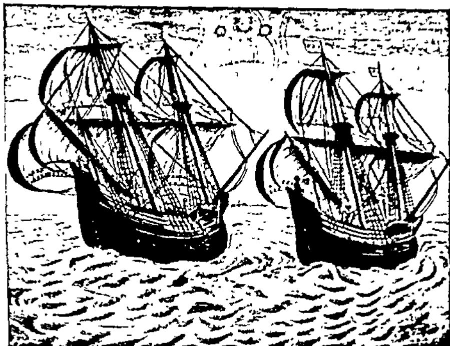
He is the psychological poet among all others; and by consciously shifting the domain of art into the realm of the implicit, he has prepared the way for the supreme enrichment of modern literature.

3. *Coleridge.*—Coleridge[1] possesses the most vigorous mind

[1] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, born in 1772, in Devonshire, studied at Christ's Hospital and Cambridge; under Southey's influence he adopted revolutionary principles, and formed with his friend the scheme of a settlement on communistic and philosophical principles (or pantisocracy) in the New World. The instability of his nervous life, already evidenced by his erratic impulsions, led him to make a constant use of opium. His poetic vocation was stimulated by contact with Wordsworth, near whom he lived in the Southwest (1797-8) and, after a sojourn in Germany (1798-9), in the Lake district. He had published *Poems on Various Subjects*, 1796, and several pieces, before collaborating in the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798, in which his principal contribution was *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. He wrote in conjunction with Southey an unfinished historical drama, *The Fall of Robespierre*, 1794; a tragedy, *Osorio*, 1797, which he remodelled later (*Remorse*, 1813); translated *The Piccolomini* and *The Death of Wallenstein*, by Schiller (1799-1800). He stayed at Malta (1804-6), and after a long struggle, he began about 1816 to slowly free himself from opium. He again published collections of poems (*Christabel*, etc., 1816; *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817); but from now onwards it was prose which absorbed him (philosophy, criticism, religion, politics): *The Friend*, a periodical, 1809-10; *The Statesman's Manual*, 1816; *Biographia Literaria*, 1817; *Aids to Reflection*, 1825, etc. He died in 1834. His lectures on Shakespeare, Milton, etc. (1808-19) were collected after his death. A volume of intimate notes was published in 1895 (*Anima Poetae*). *Poetical Works*, ed. by Dykes Campbell, 1894; ed. by E. H. Coleridge, 1912; *Selected Poems*, ed. by Keeling, 1910; *Biog. Lit.*, ed. by Shawcross, 1907; *Literary Criticism*, ed. by Mackail, 1908; *Letters*, ed. by E. H. Coleridge, 1895; *Poetry and Prose*, ed. H. W. Garrod, 1925. See studies by Traill (English Men of Letters), 1884; Brandl (English translation, 1887); J. Aynard (*C., la vie d'un poète*, 1907), biographical references or studies in

encies. He himself is not at pains to seek simplicity by way of principle; it is already there in the purity of his form, the texture of which is without a flaw. Nothing more definitely conveys an impression of the inevitable word than the masterpieces of Coleridge, whether the quality of the style be conscious and laboured, as in *The Ancient Mariner,* or whether it would seem to follow closely an inner prompting, as in *Kubla Khan.*

Both poems are visions; in *Christabel* as in *The Three Graves,* reality plays an increasing part, but that of the invisible still remains paramount. The very centre of Coleridge's art lies in his faculty of evoking the mystery of things, and making it actual, widespread, and obsessing. Even better than Wordsworth, because his is the more powerful imagination, and with him the haunting sense of the inexpressible is keener, less subservient to a strong moral purpose, he knows how to handle that species of the supernatural whose essence is entirely psychological. His somewhat wavering metaphysics, made up, above all, of desire, and only borrowing the fragments of a system from the German disciples of Kant, is based upon an intuition of the

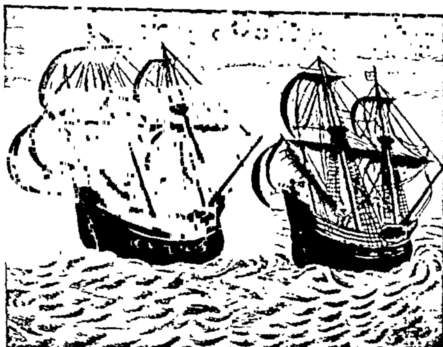


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Coleridge possesses as well a vein of intimate effusion, a homely, religious inspiration, and the direct utterance of emotional moods; besides descriptive pieces of a type already common, but which he stamps with new characteristics. In such works the landscape is interwoven with the feelings, in accordance with an irresistible association, the wholly subjective quality of which he himself perceives and points out with sad clear-

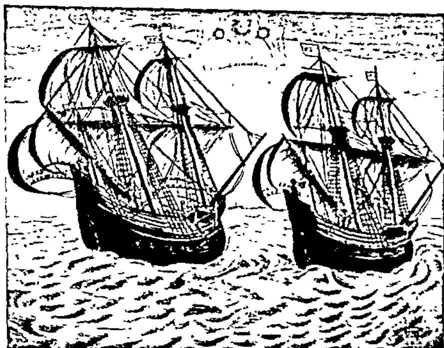


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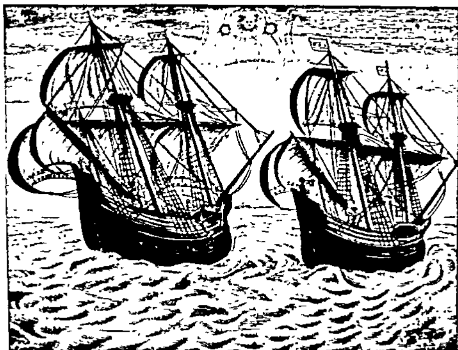


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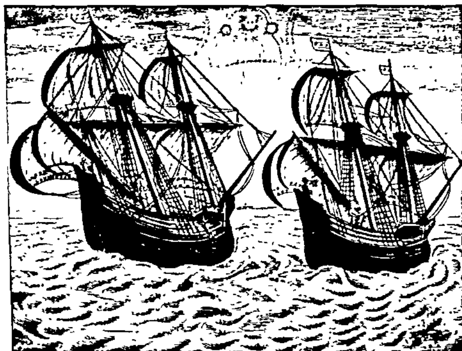


"A Strange Sight in the Element." From Gerrit de Veer, "The True and Perfect Description of Three Voyages, So Strange and Wonderful, that the Like Hath Never Been Heard of Before," the Amsterdam Edition of 1619. From such sources Coleridge derived the imagery of "The Ancient Mariner."

encies. He himself is not at pains to seek simplicity by way of principle; it is already there in the purity of his form, the texture of which is without a flaw. Nothing more definitely conveys an impression of the inevitable word than the masterpieces of Coleridge, whether the quality of the style be conscious and laboured, as in *The Ancient Mariner,* or whether it would seem to follow closely an inner prompting, as in *Kubla Khan.*

Both poems are visions; in *Christabel* as in *The Three Graves,* reality plays an increasing part, but that of the invisible still remains paramount. The very centre of Coleridge's art lies in his faculty of evoking the mystery of things, and making it actual, widespread, and obsessing. Even better than Wordsworth, because his is the more powerful imagination, and with him the haunting sense of the inexpressible is keener, less subservient to a strong moral purpose, he knows how to handle that species of the supernatural whose essence is entirely psychological. His somewhat wavering metaphysics, made up, above all, of desire, and only borrowing the fragments of a system from the German disciples of Kant, is based upon an intuition of the essential unity existing between our spirit and the divine. To descend to the depth of our consciousness, is to discover the immanent being; in this way we are able to penetrate beyond the plane of appearance and sense; it is only in questioning ourselves that we can unravel the universe; the true, the only events are those of the soul, and the special domain of poetry is this inner theatre. Here will be staged the episodes and reactions which it narrates; and the feelings which it would arouse in us must be registered by our spiritual eyes. The supernatural element in *The Ancient Mariner* is a hallucination, the outcome of remorse; by the most sober of methods *Christabel* suggests the terror of a vague menace. The vivid intensity of effects in the first poem, their subtlety and diffusion through the whole atmosphere of the second, are equally the work of a very great artist.

Coleridge possesses as well a vein of intimate effusion, a homely, religious inspiration, and the direct utterance of emotional moods; besides descriptive pieces of a type already common, but which he stamps with new characteristics. In such works the landscape is interwoven with the feelings, in accordance with an irresistible association, the wholly subjective quality of which he himself perceives and points out with sad clear-



"A Strange Sight in the Element" From Gerrit de Veer, "The True and Perfect Description of Three Voyages, So Strange and Wonderful, that the Like Hath Never Been Heard of Before," the Amsterdam Edition of 1619. From such sources Coleridge derived the imagery of "The Ancient Mariner."

sightedness (*Dejection, an Ode*). He reaps a richer harvest through the senses than Wordsworth; they invest his impressions of Nature with an extraordinary freshness and splendour, and at the same time with a shrewd, minute precision which reveals the analytical mind. The complex and original savour of his work is partly the result of this blending of keen intellectuality with the receptive emotionality of a lyric poet. Therefore the purest expressions of his genius possess an incomparable quality. But these supreme moments were of short duration. It would appear as though at an early stage the excessive ardour of his thought had dried up his poetic vein. The impoverished flow becomes intermittent, is broken and fragmentary, testifying more and more to a pathetic incapacity for any sustained inspiration.

An innovator in metre, he was not a great metrist; he scarcely put to profit his extreme keenness of perception, or the creative gift which he possessed in all he did; but he consciously formulated the return of English verse to the principle of accentuation which is most suitable to its spontaneous rhythms. *Christabel* is written in lines of four accents, where the number of syllables varies on a very large scale, the pattern of the melody swelling or subsiding with the needs of the musical suggestion; while the light, ample cadence of the anapæst is introduced with delicate felicity among the shorter measures. This example of judicious freedom is at the source of the vast development in prosody which accompanies the expansion of modern English lyricism.[1]

As a philosopher, Coleridge has also been a sower of germinal ideas. His indebtedness to German philosophy has probably been overrated. He became acquainted with it at a time when his moral personality had already been formed, and he never was thoroughly acquainted with it. The doctrine of Kant, interpreted inasmuch as it founded a new metaphysics, encouraged his own tendencies. He took up the distinction between understanding and reason, only to push it to conclusions very far removed from those of Kant. He borrowed from Schelling what in his intellectual absent-mindedness he failed to acknowledge. Taken as a whole, his work reveals a general parallelism with

[1] See Saintsbury, *History of English Prosody*, vol. iii., 1910, H D Bateson, *The Rhythm of Christabel* (*Manchester Quarterly*), 1894; T. S Omond, *English Metrists*, 1907.

the intuitive, idealistic and historical movement of ideas which gives German Romanticism its essential character. But he himself declared that he was just as much the disciple of national tradition, and of Burke. He was not the master, but the immediate predecessor of Carlyle. John Stuart Mill saw in him the principal source of the reaction which an age animated with the will to believe, and basing its inner life upon the feeling of spiritual mystery, showed against the rationalism of mechanical explanations, and the extension of a scientific ideal to the things of the soul. Through the intermediary action of thinkers who were also believers—as F. D. Maurice—Coleridge's influence helped to nurture the decisive revival of idealism in the time of Carlyle, and in adjoining circles of thought.

Coleridge's fertile though discontinuous mind touched upon —and not in vain—many other subjects, such as religious philosophy, in which he attempted to establish Anglicanism upon a rational foundation; ethics, which he tried to recapture from the utilitarian system in vogue; politics, in which a passion for organic order and salutary authority led him even further than Burke in his aversion to all progress, but where he, on the other hand, discerned certain vices born of a social individualism.

It is, however, in literary criticism that his achievement is the most lasting. No one before him in England had brought such mental breadth to the discussion of æsthetic values. His judgments are all permeated by a trend of thought that is strongly under the influence of great doctrinal preconceptions; even in this domain he is the metaphysician. The well-known differentiation between imagination and fancy, which Wordsworth interpreted after his own fashion, is a way to laying stress upon the creative activity of the mind, as opposed to the passive association of mental pictures; but for Coleridge it has a mystical significance. This feeling for the secret link existing between problems, together with this habit of intermingling, even perhaps of confounding them, by no means deprives him of a penetrating sharpness of vision on precise points. In *Biographia Literaria* certain intentions, as well as certain successes or failings of Wordsworth, are caught and illuminated to their depths; so searching is the light, that it is even cruel. His remarks on Shakespeare show a sound intuition of the profound unity of dramatic art. Accustomed as he is to reach to the heart

of things, to find there the same vital impulse which animates his own thought, and to see this secret life produce what becomes the apparent world of the senses, Coleridge is thus able to discern with an unerring insight the paths along which a central impulse has radiated, so to speak, towards all the fundamental ideas, aspects and characteristics of a work.

4. *Southey.*—Competent critics were wont to class Southey[1] during his lifetime with Coleridge and Wordsworth. Since then, however, his fame has singularly waned. To-day he is the least read of the Lake poets. Almost the whole of his work is touched with the blight. It has lost its vitality, and there is no reason to expect that it will ever regain it.

The cause of this inherent weakness lies in the writer's own personality. He has well-defined aims, a doctrine, and a consciously sustained nobility of subjects and themes; but genius he lacks; his is only a very estimable talent, and is not always even that. He deceived certain people because he shared the theories and the effort of the new school of poetry. Of the revolutionary sins of his early youth, on the other hand, he repents with an even more reassuring prudence than that of his companions; to national sentiment, to the spirit of an age carried back by the instinct of self-preservation towards the traditional order of things, he gives more absolute pledges; and being less original, he has a greater appeal for the average taste of his time. He was made Poet Laureate long before Wordsworth. From the day when he found himself without the support of a group of

[1] Robert Southey, born in 1774 at Bristol, studied at Westminster School, then at Oxford; was converted to revolutionary ideas at an early date and formed a friendship with Coleridge. He wrote a social drama, *Wat Tyler* (1794; published 1817), and an epic poem, *Joan of Arc*, 1795; published *Poems*, 1794, 1797. After his marriage, he paid two visits to Portugal, and, following several vain attempts to decide his calling, he settled down near Coleridge at Keswick, in the Lake dis- [illegible] ting conservatism [illegible] Laureateship in [illegible] *The Curse of* [illegible] graphies: *Life of* [illegible] *Brazil*, 1810-19; [illegible] ses (*Sir Thomas More*, 1829; *Essays*, 1832); translations; numerous articles for the *Quarterly Review*, etc. He edited Chatterton (18 [illegible] English poets, etc. Died in 1843. *Poems*, ed [illegible] ed. by Dowden, 1895; *Life of Nelson*, ed. by [illegible] shed by his son, 1849-50; selected letters, ed. [illegible] ed. by Zeitlin, 1916. See Dowden, *Southey* (English Men of Letters), [illegible] Dennis, *R. Southey*, 1887; Cestre, *Révol. Franc et poètes angl.*, 1906; Haller, *The Early Life of R. S., 1774-1803*, 1917.

writers, and lacking a political or social setting for his work, his own claims to recognition showed themselves to be inferior. He deserves to be remembered, but it would be vain to attempt to revive his glory.

His longer poems are imposing structures, erected by meritorious labour, in which despite the brilliancy of certain details there reigns a monotonous tedium. Their conception is false. Southey is still unconsciously subservient to the æsthetic purposes of the eighteenth century; and he writes, not from a genuine need for self-expression, but in order to fulfil the programme traced out, as it were, by an obligation of the mind. He commits to verse a vague, exotic mythology, the visions and customs of Arabia, Mexico, and India, and so deprives himself of the advantage of a real humanity. His imagination, moreover, obedient to moral discipline, is unable to bring to this phantasmagoria the freedom which alone could give it charm. A biblical or Christian background, sentimental and puritan preoccupations, find themselves strangely associated with the Oriental setting of the *Arabian Nights*. *Thalaba* is a vast epic allegory in which some beautiful episodes are enacted; *Kehama* is still more arid; the first part of *Madoc,* and above all *Roderick,* in which the surroundings and the subject make us feel more at home, and where the emotion is more sincere and natural, sustain well enough a tone which though austere is not without grandeur.

Southey, like his friends, wished to acquire a pure and unadorned style; and in this he has achieved a fair measure of success. He aims at a simple sobriety of expression, at the moving appeal of elementary emotions. But he has not the powerful concentration of Wordsworth, the radiant force of his spiritual lyricism, nor Coleridge's thrill of the supernatural. His modest and realistic notations look naïve, while his precision is prosaic. Besides, he cannot rid himself of abstractions. In quest of prosodiacal novelty, and eager for an independence which to him appears as a kind of moral idealism, he writes *Thalaba* in a singularly jejune metre, a sort of cadenced prose with lines of very unequal length, the idea for which he borrowed from an obscure poet (Sayers), and which for a brief spell Shelley was to imitate. This form, no doubt, possesses great suppleness,

but it lacks any vestige of art; the want of all perceptible regularity or symmetry stamps it with a wholly arbitrary character. *Kehama* adds rhyme to this scheme, but without permanence. After these unhappy attempts, we find a degree of comfort in *Roderick* and *Madoc*, where there is a frank return to blank verse of five beats.

The shorter poems, of occasional or official character, fall too often into a painful mediocrity, which nothing relieves, not even an adventurous and interesting error. The best are those which have demanded least effort, and where rapid inspiration has been most directly expressed. Special mention must be made of the ode, full of a burning hatred, in which Southey's patriotism pours itself forth in execrating tones against Imperial France; and chiefly of the ballads and tales in verse, where he displays an unsuspected gift of forcefulness and humour. Whether the vein be one of imaginative terror or of popular joviality, the language here shows a nervous strength which at times recalls Burns. These short pieces, by their themes as by their familiar and robust art, are related to the whole movement whose outcome is the *Lyrical Ballads;* to this Southey's receptive nature has added many and various influences—those of Scott, of the novelists of terror, of the German Romanticists—without the product losing in true originality. Widely quoted in anthologies, these ballads probably represent the only living part of his poetical output.

In his very copious prose, there is one outstanding book, which every cultured Englishman has read, namely, *The Life of Nelson*, a fortunate volume, inasmuch as most of its value is derived from a subject of extraordinary quality. The moral biography testifies to limited powers of penetration, and in outlining before Carlyle the cult of heroism, Southey infuses it too exclusively with the passion of nationality. But a great figure, a type of energy and ambition, is portrayed in all its striking distinctness; the almost undeflected development of its epic career is accurately traced; and the compact account of the many incidents in this life preserves all the interest of the most captivating tale of adventure.

5. *The Poetry of Scott.*—At first glance, one might be led into thinking that a similar fate had befallen the poems of

Southey and those of Scott.[1] The latter were very popular from the moment they appeared, being eclipsed only by Byron in the public favour; their immediate and complete success marks the first official triumph of the new school. Neglected, however, after 1815, by their author himself, who had found a vaster field of activity in the novel, and overshadowed by the daring efforts of the second generation of poets, they knew a gradual decline. At the present day, the general reader leaves them aside. But with unobtrusive modesty, they continue to live; and as this test of a whole century is probably decisive, everything points to a discreet survival.

They assuredly embody the intentions and influences of Romanticism; but they do not originate, as is the case with Southey's epics, in an intellectual and theoretical source; countless are the natural bonds linking them up with the Scottish soil, with a national past, with a wealth of memories and sentiments which the poet shares with his immediate compatriots, and which a spontaneous sympathy renders accessible to all British readers. The feudalism and mediæval customs revived by Scott are not part of a very distant past; the clan spirit, the rich local life of a people steeped in traditions still retain something of that age; therefore the effort of imagination demanded of the reader is neither so great nor so artificial as with other writers. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* is definitely placed at the end of that belated transition which joins up the Middle Ages with modern times. The atmosphere of the poem is thus created by a direct intuition in which art and archæology commingle, blended by the fervour of a warm literary patriotism.

[1] Walter Scott, born in Edinburgh in 1771, the son of a lawyer, had his imagination fired from the earliest years by the traditions of Southern Scotland. He studied at the university of his native town and prepared for the Bar; but his literary vocation was revealed to him in the course of the rambles taken to collect legends and ballads. He learned German, translated the *Lenore* of Bürger (1795), the *Goetz* of Goethe (1799), collaborated in the *Tales of Wonder* of Lewis (1801): published a collection of popular poetry, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 1802-3; then original poems: *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, 1805; *Marmion*, 1808; *The Lady of the Lake*, 1810; *The Vision of Don Roderick*, 1811; *Rokeby*, 1813; *The Bridal of Triermain*, 1813; *The Lord of the Isles*, 1815; *Harold the Dauntless*, 1817. After the publication of *Waverley*, 1814, he devoted all his attention to the novel; but he still composed numerous short poems (*Miscellaneous Poems*, 1820; *Poetry Contained in the Novels*, etc., *of the Author of Waverley*, 1822, etc.). For the rest of his work see below, chap. ii. *Poetical Works*, ed. by Robertson, 1904; ed. by Lang, 1905; *Selections*, ed. by A. H. Thompson, 1922. See Veitch, *Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry*, 1887, vol. ii.; Morgan, *Scott and His Poetry*, 1913; Franke, *Der Stil in den epischen Dichtungen Scotts*, 1909; Sarrazin, *Poètes Mod. d'Angleterre*, 1884; Margraf, *Der Einfluss der deutschen Litteratur auf die englische*, etc., 1901.

There is nothing, however, as yet of the atmosphere which belongs to the historical novels of Scott, with their humour, their colouring applied with a touch at once lavish and sure. The past is evoked in a spirit romantic before it is human. The choice of descriptive traits, the development of action and the characterisation are a trifle conventional. A secret complacency on the part of the author tends to incline everything towards picturesqueness, pathos, mystery, and even terror, as Scott indeed retains a trace of his youthful enthusiasm for the thrill of the German ballads and for the school of the supernatural. His romanticism is a synthesis of all the elements which two generations have set free: imaginative emotion, the lure of the past, the taste for chivalry, a sentimental respect for warlike and religious customs, the love of nature, all of which with Scott are strongly individualised through his close familiarity with the Scottish landscape and social life.

However, the dominant characteristic of these poems is to be found in their sobriety of tone. They are subservient to an essential discipline and measure. The descriptive vein is always strongly controlled; the pictures of nature, whether charming, delicate or powerful, are never luxuriant; tragedy with Scott never reaches the stage of horror, nor is the fanciful element ever developed at the expense of an implicit logic. A faint suggestion of irony hovers at times like a smile over the narrative. The style, with its ease and liquid movement, has remarkable clarity and a striking economy of means. The verse, supple and modelled on the undulating flow of the sentiment, is of a very rhythmic quality. Scott recognised his indebtedness to the model of fluid freedom offered by the *Christabel* of Coleridge; but he had too sure a touch not to be a born poet. Through all these traits, the indefinable atmosphere of simplicity, wholesomeness and truth which permeates these flights of the imagination, saving them from any extravagance, one can feel the presence of a very shrewd intellectuality. Scott is one of those semi-classicists by temperament who leave room for the continuity of tradition at the very heart of Romanticism. He is too conservative by instinct to be a thorough revolutionary in any sphere whatsoever.

The persisting charm of his chivalric epics, their lasting hold upon us, thus arise from the fact that below what is but a pass-

ing fashion they link up with a balanced, normal art, which a fresh inspiration has revivified. Yet the close proximity of the novels will always do them harm, since they are too inferior to Scott's prose in the study and development of characters. Beside them, on the other hand, one must not forget the shorter poems—whose form is often that of the ballad—in which Scott has shown a more intense, at times outstanding gift of lyricism.[1]

To be consulted: L. Abercrombie, *Romanticism*, 1926; Barstow, *Wordsworth's Theory of Poetic Diction*, 1917; Beatty, *W. Wordsworth, His Doctrine and Art*, etc., 1926; Beers, *History of English Romanticism in the 19th Century*, 1902; Brandes, *Die Hauptströmungen*, etc., vol. iv., 1876; English translation, 1905; Brandl, *Coleridge*, 1886; Crane Brinton, *The Political Ideas of the English Romanticists*, 1926; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. xi. chaps. v. vi. viii.; vol. xii. chap. i.; Carré, *Goethe en Angleterre*, 1920; Cazamian, *L'Intuition panthéiste*, etc. (*Etudes de psychol. littér.*), 1913; Coleridge, *Biographia literaria*, ed. by Shawcross, 1907; idem, chaps. i.-iv., xiv.-xxii., and *Prefaces* of Wordsworth, ed. by Sampson, 1920; Cestre, *La Révolution Française et les Poètes Anglais*, 1906; Courthope, *History of English Poetry*, vol. vi., 1910; Elton, *Survey of English Literature*, 1780-1830; new edn., 1920; Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age*, 1825; Herford, *The Age of Wordsworth*, 1897; Legouis, *La Jeunesse de Wordsworth*, 1897; Lockhart, *Life of Scott*, 1837-8; new edn., 1903; J. L. Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*, 1927; W. L. Mathieson, *England in Transition*, 1789-1832, 1921; Neilson, *Essentials of Poetry*, 1912; Oliphant, *Literary History of England at the End of the 18th and the Beginning of the 19th Century*, 1882; Omond, *The Romantic Triumph*, 1900; Pierce, *Currents and Eddies in the English Romantic Generation*, 1919; De Quincey, *Reminiscences of the Lake Poets* (*Works*, ed. by Masson, 1889); G. R. Richardson, *A Neglected Aspect of the English Romantic Revolt*, 1915; Crabb Robinson, *Diary*, ed. by Sadler, 1869; idem, *Selections*, ed. by Morley, 1922; Saintsbury, *History of English Prosody*, 1906-10; Sarrazin, *La Renaissance de la poésie anglaise*, 1887; Symons, *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry*, 1909; Verrier, *Essai sur les principes de la métrique anglaise*, 1909-10; Dorothy Wordsworth, *Journal*, ed. by Knight, 1897; Th. Watts-Dunton, *The Renascence of Wonder in Poetry* (*Chambers's Cyclop. of English Literature*, vol. iii.), 1903.

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[1] With this generation must be connected the delicate, intimate effusions of Charles Lamb, who was closely associated with the enthusiasm, theories and projects of Coleridge and his group. His best poems, with their nostalgic emotion, their penetrating simplicity, recall Blake and Wordsworth, but possess, at the same time, an original note. (For the prose work of Lamb, see below, chap. v.) *The Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by Hutchinson, 1908. And among poets of less personal significance, such as Charles Lloyd, there is a more distinct figure, Henry Kirke White (1785-1806), whose early death at 21 took on a symbolic value for this Romantic age. *Remains*, ed. by Southey, 1807-22; *Poems*, etc., ed. by Drinkwater, 1908.

CHAPTER II

THE NOVEL

1. *Walter Scott.*—The poems of Scott belonged to the first generation of Romanticists. His novels,[1] in the order of chronology, belong to the second; but the spirit animating them is still that of the first. There is no indication of their author having been influenced by the change in matters political and intellectual about 1815; he retains his opinions, his temperament, and the natural bent of his imagination. His personality is henceforth too firmly moulded to alter, but develops with greater freedom in a field of wider horizon. While the poetry of this age enlists a great number of the most brilliant talents, Scott's supremacy in the novel is sovereign. For nearly twenty years, everything is eclipsed by his work.

His pages have kept an incomparable charm and youthfulness. Neither fashions nor the changes in taste have had any

[1] The prose work of Sir Walter Scott comprises novels: *Waverley*, 1814; *Guy Mannering*, 1815; *The Antiquary*, 1816; *Tales of My Landlord* (*Old Mortality*, 1816; *The Heart of Midlothian*, 1818; *The Bride of Lammermoor*, 1819); *Rob Roy*, [illegible] 1821; [illegible] *uentin* [illegible] *sades*, [illegible] *rstein*, [illegible] until [illegible] y had been surmised. Their success made Scott a wealthy man, and he led a princely existence in his luxurious abode at Abbotsford; but owing to the failure of a publisher, he had to consecrate the last ten years of his life to an exhausting task. He died in 1832, leaving among other writings: *The Border Antiquities of England* [illegible] *ives of the* [illegible] *uonaparte*, [illegible] He edited [illegible] *wift*, 1814. [illegible] *tters*, 1894. [illegible] 912. Most numerous [illegible] 1906, etc.). [illegible] *l'influence de W. Scott*), 1898; Cross (*Develop. of English Novel*, [illegible]), [illegible] 1901; Lang, 1906; Wyndham, 1908; Elton (*Survey of English Lit.*), 1920; Stalker (*The Intimate Life of Sir W. S.*), 1921.

serious effect upon them. Whether appraised or not by enlightened opinion and the critics, they have remained truly popular, and seem almost entirely to have become part of the treasure of permanent literature, and been added to the fund itself of the national heritage.

It would be vain, however, to deny that the years have encroached upon this work. It is not all of an equal quality or resisting power; and it was not given the careful labour which alone assures perfection. It has, no doubt, the happy touch, the divine facility, the wealth of a creation of genius. One feels that it wells up from a natural source; it is the outcome of a full inspiration, that has been already prepared by the assimilative play of memory, the activity of thought, the continual exercising of the imagination during half a lifetime. Scott was intimately acquainted with the past of Scotland, which he had explored in documents, history and legend; he had lived through it again by calling it up in its original setting, and had given it the reality of concrete form by discovering its latent presence in the manners, traditions and language, in all the existing originality of a people. This unconscious preparation had been so long and full, that from the day when the novelist and not the poet put it to contribution for pictures of a more ample scope, it appeared to be inexhaustible. In it lies the deep value of these reconstructions of history, and by investing them with the gift of life, which it has rendered possible, it supplies them with the atmosphere of a rich and flavoured humanity. But Scott certainly allowed himself to be led away too much by the ease of rapid invention; and probably it is to this cause that must be traced, along with the few lapses in form, some more internal flaws, which time has brought into prominence.

These are nearly all reducible to certain insufficiencies of the writer's art, to devices which are too facile. In the century which has followed, both the technique of the novel and the requirements of the reader have come to be modified; over and above the theories of the moment, a substantial agreement has been reached concerning some demands which might prove to be of a lasting character. We require sober truth, an objective outlook upon things, or if the writer's fancy and sensibility become a law unto themselves, we are loath to let them have the benefit of an optimism which savours too much of banal convention to be

interesting. Fiction plays too important a part in the novel of Scott, and especially the fiction which does not wish to be treated as such. No one save the specialist suffers from the liberties he takes with the historical detail. The conception of truth, with him, has not yet acquired that scrupulous exactitude which the whole activity of thought in the nineteenth century will impart to it. But the cordial good-naturedness which lends so much winning charm to his work cannot excuse the too easy complacency of his critical sense or artistic conscience. The author is too frequently butting in upon the story; the monologues of the characters, the set conversation of those who rise above the ordinary rank, lose all semblance of reality. The creation of atmosphere in the novels is brought about by a series of conjunctures which too obviously reveal a common end. An æsthetic and moral Providence carries on the story, leading it towards a conclusion which flatters a sentimental and moral preconception no doubt quite worthy in itself, but from which it would seem that a more severe taste has gradually receded. The conventional treatment of the love themes, as of the characterisation of the young heroes and heroines, is in keeping with the fanciful tone of the plots, at least in some of their parts. There is in this whole series of effects a perspective such as that of the theatre, allowable, no doubt, as soon as the treatment of truth is only summarily and superficially faithful, but here at variance with the deep and exacting spirit of accuracy that in every other respect animates the realistic imagination of Scott.

It must be recognised, however, that he benefits by the quality of his fault; his art has about it a genuine simplicity, an unpretentiousness, that are restful after the strained objectivity of recent schools. And such blemishes are of slight import; they set a date upon the art of Scott, without aging it. The only consequence is that the reader must more clearly and more consciously accept the part played by artifice, by one main fiction and by some derived postulates, in the production of an illusion which can in fact never be complete.

The essential point is that this illusion, in far the majority of cases, and if nothing intervenes to impair the normal elasticity of our sense of the real, is a wonderful success. Scott makes us live again in past centuries, and makes innumerable human beings of his invention visible, familiar and akin to our-

selves; whether he entirely creates them, or recreates their souls and borrows their names from history. His work is one of the happiest attempts ever made to evoke what is no longer extant; it owes this triumph to the imaginative intuition which Romanticism had stimulated, but also to a psychological truth that is sufficiently deep, and to a grasp of man's nature that is broad enough, to satisfy needs of our minds more constant than a taste for purely historical truth.

The novels form unequal groups according to their themes, varying in number as in value. Scott loses his force as he wanders from the solid ground of contemporary reality, and from those features of it which are of a durable enough nature to be looked upon as ancient; it is through the present that he interprets and reconstructs the past. Therefore, the periods he chooses by preference are not very remote; his favourite domain stretches from the Reformation to the last civil struggles of the eighteenth century. He organises his subjects round the great religious or political conflicts which during these two hundred years most seriously impaired the moral unity of the Scottish people; and as the Romanticism of feeling and imagination is above all attracted by lost causes, it is to Puritanism and to the allegiance of the Jacobites that through the force of the tale the involuntary sympathies of the reader are often drawn; a solid proof of the remarkable impartiality of Scott, who as a Tory and a friend of order retained some kindly feelings for the Stuarts, but who reproved fanaticism without reserve. It was his desire to keep the scales even, to grant to all parties and men the same kindly interest, and here he was almost always successful.

The novels which transport us to England or the Continent, and abandon the opening years of the modern era for the Middle Ages, betray this effort more distinctly; they reach their aim less completely: yet they accomplish some very fine feats; although historians do not spare certain aspects of *Ivanhoe,* they praise the atmosphere of the work, while it is generally agreed that the light shed upon Louis XI. and his time by *Quentin Durward* is not to be disparaged. But still, when all is considered, there are no achievements in this kind which can come up to the scenes enacted in those lowland districts of Scotland, so beloved and cherished by Scott; and for example, to the episodes whose setting is the capital (*The Heart of Midlothian,* etc.). In the

same way, the landscape is evoked throughout with a poetic freshness, which is devoid of all impassioned ardour of exuberance; the description of nature, within these limits, is more widely treated in Scott's prose than in his verse; but the stretches of heath, the peat-lands, the wild valleys of Scotland are more accurately, more forcefully depicted than the vast forests of feudal England.

Set thus in a framework of events largely fictitious, which, however, our sense of truth approves, and standing out against a background of nature and manners which are sufficiently rich in detail to be convincing, picturesque enough to be attractive, and the authority of which is chiefly derived from a national and intimate feeling of sympathetic familiarity, Scott's personages win our full approbation; there is no resisting their vitality. They offer a complete range of characterisation, from the most rapid sketches to the most carefully executed portraits; their abundance and diversity astonish us. Their physical being, and the salient peculiarities of their moral being, are what always determine them. At times the analysis goes further, probing to the depths, and aiming at the most individual shades; but Scott is not preoccupied with the psychology that penetrates; he does not seek for complicated tangles of the soul, and consequently hardly ever comes upon any; on occasion he will be easily satisfied indeed. In certain cases he has desired to make a more searching analysis of a character, and has done so; but as a rule he sums up at one stroke the personality which interests him, grasps it with a vigorous hold, and draws its physiognomy with a broad, firm touch; and having once animated it, he leaves it to radiate the life thus given it to the very end. In this way his characters do not change.

His most unforgettable creations are those of episodic or simple personages, who are devoid of all mystery, and who reveal themselves wholly to us in one flash. Despite the attraction of some impressive figures of rebels, ruined noblemen and chieftains, it is the ordinary people, such as peasants, shopkeepers, housewives and servants, who constitute, by virtue of the artistic relief and intensity of touch with which they are painted, his richest and most attractive gallery of portraits.

And this is because the humbler classes can best voice the humour of Scott. Higher up in the social scale, moral dignity

imposes a restraint upon the freedom implied in the expression of that humour. It implies a realism of method, an openness in the display of originality, a conscious and discreet revelation of one's self, an art of apparent naïvety and secret roguishness, which scarcely harmonise with the circumspection and reserve of refined manners. In its very essence it savours of the people. It has its roots in a full sense of life, in the experience of all the illogicality which its complexity conceals, in an alert attention to all the perceptible elements through which the solution of its problems reveals itself, in a spontaneously concrete appreciation of the qualities and paradoxes of things.

This deep fertilising force of the Scottish mind makes its presence felt in all Scott's creations; it is the sole support of whole scenes, episodes and characters, and is more or less intermingled with nearly all the other sources of interest. His pathos itself is rarely without an after-taste of it. Even the poet's thought elaborates and refines it, and makes it the spiritual aroma of his philosophy. This is the element which imparts to his work an all-pervading spirit of kindliness and light irony, and which tempers the satire with indulgence, the sympathy with amusement. At this degree of superior concentration, humour acts as a kind of twofold wisdom, blending, correcting, and especially relieving the one by means of the other, the bitterness of clear discernment and the sweetness of charity. This suppleness of a judgment which is ever conscious of what is relative becomes reflected in an expression intentionally transposed, which chooses indirect ways because the hearer derives an added pleasure from unravelling them, and because they better comply with the essential scepticism of a soul that refuses to be dogmatically absorbed in one set mode of feeling. Scott's humour has a ring of Scottish shrewdness and kindliness about it. This note is to be heard throughout his work, and lends a character of unity to the vast comedy of existence; it assumes a different key according to the environment, the age and the sex of the persons who are shown to us; but a stronger affinity gives it all its clearness and charm in the language of simple folks; and the dialect of Scotland, at various degrees of raciness and genuineness, is intimately associated with it in its effects of full-flavoured and sly rusticity.

The passages in which this dialect predominates offer special difficulty to the uninitiated reader; but this is easily overcome;

and at once, one comes to prefer them. Here it is that the language of Scott enjoys all its advantages. Its easy manner harmonises with a familiar form of speech. In other places, it has great merits, and lends itself freely to lively or sustained narration, to description, to pathos, to reflections of a moralising nature; but it does not keep up all these tones with an equal felicity, or rather there are some among these tones which are not happy in themselves. The edifying reflections, and interventions on the part of the author, imply at times a slightly artificial dignity; one finds there, as it were, a vein of phraseology still permeated with the spirit of the eighteenth century, which impairs the otherwise sound quality of a simple, direct style.

On the whole, the superficial flaws in form do not detract in any way from the deep merits of the work. Scott has the genius of the narrator; but he has the corresponding talent no less, and his tale is carried on by a very supple and very steady art, which sets up, develops and works out to a final close, through a very varied series of moments, a symphonic composition of sovereign breadth. Incidents, pauses, picturesque evocations, and dialogues, are interwoven with an instinctive, sure sense of measure; and the semblance of reality which characterises the various exchanges of talk, especially in the popular scenes, nearly always succeeds in at once convincing us.

The novel of Scott represents the triumph of Romanticism in the imaginative re-creation of the past, associated with all the diverse emotions which the tragic or comic drama of life can awaken. It therefore takes the place of the theatre, in which the literature of this period has produced no masterpieces. Certain of the inner tendencies of Romanticism are here exploited to the limit, such as the liking for bygone ages, the luring of the reader's interest away from the present, the dramatic vision of life; it has even its touch of the supernatural and the mysterious (*The Bride of Lammermoor*, *Redgauntlet*, etc.). But by virtue of its humour, its sense of balance, the mental calm and self-possession it implies, it can also claim kinship with the psychological characteristics of classicism. By bringing Romanticism so near to the real and complete life of every day as to confound the one with the other, even if that life be a vanished and miraculously restored one, Scott has given Romanticism an average and normal value, a soundness, an immunity from any feverish-

ness, that it does not possess even in the poetry of a Wordsworth.

2. *Realism; Adventure and Terror in the Novel.*—Despite the illusion created by its superiority, Scott's work in the novel is not isolated, cut off from that of his contemporaries. He recognised his indebtedness to the Irish scenes of Miss Edgeworth.[1] Amongst his numerous and mediocre imitators, one should make mention of Galt,[2] who in the course of an uncertain career had himself conceived before Scott the idea of exploiting the picturesqueness of Scottish life, but to whom the Waverley novels came as an encouragement and example. His best studies are confined to ordinary and familiar aspects of life; and by freeing this new form of literature from all the historical elements of Romanticism, they turn it in the direction of a minute, humorous and tenderly inspired realism.

Among the diverse elements brought together in the work of Scott, it is indeed the realism which undoubtedly, after the history, proves the greatest force of attraction. Even in the success of imaginative fiction, literature retains its appreciation of concrete reality; and the distinctive feature of the romantic novel, as a whole, lies in the boldness with which it adds new provinces to reality. The popularity of a Hook[3] is due to the fact that he resolutely brings a democratic and modern spirit to bear upon his atmosphere and subject-matter. Marryat[4] revives the tradition of Sterne and Smollett; to the lively interest of his tale he adds a rich vein of humour, and by his painting of sea-faring folks and their life he has conquered a field in which he remains one of the masters. Miss Mitford,[6] in her charming

[1] See above, Book IV. chap. vi. sect. 2; and the Preface to the *Waverley Novels*, edn. 1829.

[2] John Galt, 1779-1839, born in the southwest of Scotland, led an eventful life and produced a very large number of diverse works. *The Annals of the Parish* was written before *Waverley*, but remained unpublished until 1821. See also *The Ayrshire Legatees*, 1821; *The Entail*, 1823. Similarly Susan Ferrier (1782-1854) wrote her first novel before reading those of Scott, but was one of the latter's literary followers (*Marriage*, 1818; *The Inheritance*, 1824; *Destiny*, 1831). With Croly, James, Ainsworth, Scott's influence is continued after 1830.

[3] Theodore Hook, 1788-1841, dramatist, improvisator, etc., published nine volumes of short stories, *Sayings and Doings*, 1824-8; numerous novels, among which *Jack Brag*, 1837.

[4] Frederick Marryat, 1792-1848, after a career as naval officer, began with *Frank Mildmay* (1829) a long series of sea novels, among which *Peter Simple*, 1834; *Midshipman Easy*, 1836, etc. See *Life and Letters*, 1872; study by Hannay, 1889.

[6] Mary Russell Mitford, 1787-1855, wrote for the stage with creditable success;

studies of village customs, her landscape descriptions, as exact as they are poetic, announces both the *Cranford* of Mrs. Gaskell and the work of Richard Jefferies. Lastly, the psychological realism of Jane Austen is handled with a much less delicate touch, and with some worldliness, but not without force, by Mrs. Gore.[1]

Meanwhile, the most characteristic, though not the most brilliant, type of the romantic novel, the model of which had been supplied by Mrs. Radcliffe and Lewis, continues to prosper. The supernatural with all its terror is still popular. This branch of literature, very fertile in itself but poor artistically, reaches one of the culminating points in its development with the *Melmoth* of Maturin,[2] a work of striking intensity. The *Frankenstein* of Mrs. Shelley[3] rises above the mere search after the common thrill of fear; here terror is idealised by being fused with the scientific and philosophical anguish of thought. Through this intermediary we understand the link which exists between this ardour of sensitive imagination, and the cult of the emotions, common to the great lyrical poets of the period. Just as Southey, Coleridge and Scott had all contributed to the collective stimulation which gave us the *Tales of Terror* by Lewis (1801), we find in Mrs. Shelley's fiction the passionate curiosity as to what lies beyond, the preoccupied interest in the marvellous and the morbid, which entered into Byron's and Shelley's daily life during their sojourn in Switzerland (1816).

To be consulted: Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror*, 1921; *Cambridge Hist. of English Literature*, vol. xi. chap. xiii ; vol. xii. chaps i. and xvi ; Cross, *Development of English Novel*, 1899, Elton, *Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830*, 1920; Killen, *Le Roman terrifiant*, etc., 1915, Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir W. Scott*, etc., new edn, 1903; Maigron, *Le Roman historique à l'époque romantique*, 1898; Olcott, *The Country of Sir W. Scott*, 1913; Scarborough, *The Supernatural in Mod. English Fiction*, 1917; Veitch, *History and Poetry of the Scottish Border*, 2nd edn., 1893.

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but it is to her simple, fresh sketches of provincial life (*Our Village, Sketches of Rural Character and Scenery*, 1819-32), that she owes her privileged place in English hearts. In her descriptions of nature there is a strong local colouring, and the current of regional literature in the 19th century has one of its sources in her work, as in that of Scott or Galt See her *Recollections of a Literary Life*, 1852; L'Estrange, *The Friendships of M. R. Mitford*, etc., 1882; the study by C. Hill (*M. R. M. and Her Surroundings*), 1920.

[1] C. G. R. Gore, 1799-1861; *Mothers and Daughters*, 1831; *Mrs. Armytage*, 1836.

[2] Ch. Robt. Maturin, 1782-1824; *The Fatal Revenge*, 1807; *Melmoth the Wanderer*, 1820. For his influence in France, see Ch. Bonnier, *Milieux d'Art*, 1910; A. M. Killen, *Le Roman terrifiant*, etc., 1915; and study by N. Idman, 1924.

[3] Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, daughter of Godwin, 1797-1851; *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, 1817; *The Last Man*, 1826.

The alliance thus formed enabled it to actualise its theories to a great extent, but at the same time somewhat narrowed its horizon.

With the advent of the second generation of Romanticists, the separation between rational doctrines and literature proper becomes greatly reduced. In its general trend, utilitarian thought is liberal and democratic; it is therefore on a parallel plane with the revolt of the great writers against the order imposed by society upon the soul's desires. Of a contrary psychological nature, but analogous in its political tendency, it finds itself confirming, at a distance, the effort of the rebellious artists in literature; and certain affinities begin to reveal themselves between the theorists and the poets. These partial and momentary similarities allow the general spirit of opposition to subsist; everything considered, Bentham, Malthus, Ricardo and James Mill form the most striking contrast with Keats and Shelley, no less than with Coleridge and Wordsworth. Their success, their typical and representative value, testify to the presence of a deep-rooted duality in the very texture of the needs and moral tendencies which go to constitute this age.

2. *The Utilitarians.*—There are several degrees in the scale of liberal and utilitarian intellectualism. In its original form, with the philosophers, the doctrine is concentrated, strongly rational, and offers the aspect of a well connected system, which embraces the whole field of moral and social life. In the next stage, with the popularisers and publicists, temperaments that are different stamp it with another character.

The pure theorists are not artists, and hardly deserve the name of writers. Yet they occupy too important a place in the history of ideas, for the historian of literature to overlook them. They have each his individual traits, which are not lacking in relief. So naturally do their theses link up one with another, that in a very brief summary there is a temptation to merge them together. It is necessary, however, to note the contribution of each, and to picture them in their real relationship.

Born in 1748, Bentham[1] is a survivor of the eighteenth

[1] Jeremy Bentham, 1748-1832, son of an attorney, studied at Oxford, was destined for the Bar, but devoted his whole life to thought. A moralist, the theorist of penal and political law, he published *Letters on Usury*, 1787; *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, 1789; *The Panopticon*, 1791; *A Plea for the Constitution*, 1803; *Papers upon Codification and Public Instruction*, 1817;

century; while his mind has been moulded according to the rules of law, he reacts strongly against the juridical submission to facts and circumstances. He brings into the realm of legislation and politics a fearless intellectuality, deducing from simple, clearly formulated principles the logical organisation of social welfare. He is the first of the "philosophical radicals." His early writings are lively and sharp; along with a reflective turn of mind, with self-control, and with a firm resolve to let analysis cut through all complexes, one can feel in them a still very close approximation to reality, the sense of the concrete, a shrewdness of moral perception. At a later date, the constant tension of an intellect that is absorbed by the theoretical application of ideas to things has a withering influence upon the mind, and divests the style of all inherent quality; the language tends to become nothing else than a kind of algebra. Bentham is an indefatigable writer, and leaves to his disciples—Dumont and Bowring—the care of revising, publishing and translating his works. Cosmopolitan in his tastes and culture, he sometimes writes himself in French. He is the master, the venerated centre of a group of initiated followers; his influence makes itself felt indirectly, but so great is its radiating force, that democratic England of the nineteenth century bears its recognisable stamp, and that it can be traced very far abroad.

Beside this austere but benignant sage, Malthus [1] appears as the unbending, almost fanatical apostle. Some people associate with his name the merit, and many others the hateful work, of having unflinchingly proclaimed the cruel truth of the "principle of population." His intellectual passion for the exact science of human development conceals a generosity of feeling, a soul that is essentially normal and sound; but the general public views moral matters in the simplest of lights, and from now onwards

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The Book of Fallacies, 1824, etc. On the other hand Dumont published in French from his manuscript, the *Traité de Législation civile et pénale*, 1802, the *Théorie des Peines et Récompenses*, 1811, etc. He left numerous manuscripts, in part unpublished. Bowring published his *Deontology, or Science of Morality*, 1834; retranslated the French version of Dumont, and brought out an edition of the *Works* in 11 volumes (1838-43). See Atkinson, *Bentham*, 1905.

[1] Thomas Robert Malthus, 1766-1834, of gentle stock, an Anglican clergyman, published in 1798, and anonymously, the *Essay on the Principle of Population*, revised and augmented edn, 1803. As professor of Political Economy and History in Haileybury College, he published *An Inquiry into the Nature and Progress of Rent*, 1815; *Principles of Political Economy*, 1820. See studies by Bonar (1885); G. de Molinari, 1889

begins the legend of the unnatural aridness of utilitarian thinkers. In an age of Romanticism, Malthus represents the resolute objectivity of mind, a realistic submission to the physical conditions of existence, which contradicts both the unlimited hopes of the prophets of Reason, such as Godwin, and the inspired flights of intuition with the enthusiasts of fraternal love, such as Shelley. He is indeed at the opposite pole of psychological life. . . .

Ricardo[1] shares with Malthus the admiration or aversion of the multitude; he gives liberal economy its most doctrinal form, and lays stress upon the irreconcilable conflict between a science which studies the mutual compensation of egoisms, and the emotions associated by simple-minded or sentimental beings with the theme of an improvement in the common lot. As a financier, he directs the reckoning up of opposing forces towards the abstract rigour of a kind of social mathematics. He is responsible for the classical theory of rent; and socialism will borrow from him the thesis of the "iron law" which controls wages. His book, tense, full, and difficult to read, was for a long time the highest authority in its field.

James Mill[2] bridges the gap between the pure theorists and the men of action. Of a vigorous creative intellect, he takes up again the theses of Bentham and Ricardo, leaving the mark of his personality upon them. A psychologist, a moralist and an economist, he conceives on broad lines and under all its aspects the problem of the political reorganisation of England; and through the forceful influence which he exercises upon friends or disciples, he transforms utilitarianism into an active doctrine. Around him are grouped the "philosophical radicals." No one better represents the effort made by English thought, in these opening years of the nineteenth century, to reduce the irrational element in the life of the individual or of the nation.

Utilitarianism is the name applied to the ideas of these men,

[1] David Ricardo, 1772-1823, son of a Jewish broker of Dutch origin, himself a broker, then a property owner in the country and member of Parliament; *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, 1817.

[2] James Mill, 1773-1836, born in Scotland, son of a shoemaker, had in view a church career, then settled in London (1802) and lived by his pen, or by the functions with which the East India Company entrusted him. *History of British India*, 1817-18; *Elements of Political Economy*, 1821; *Analysis of the Human Mind*, 1829. See biography by Bain, 1882; and the *Autobiography* by his son John Stuart Mill. For the latter, see below, Book VI. chap. ii.

in their whole range; but the ethics of utility are only a part of the system, and not indeed the main part. The latter themselves derive from the extension to problems of conduct, as to all others, of a method borrowed from mathematics and physics. The desire and the hope of making the various provinces of reality one, through a common mode of explanation, would of course rise in minds that were wholly won over by the prestige of mechanical solutions. Intelligence being unable to conceive of a more perfect or more legitimate device, in order to embrace the whole universe of mind, than to resolve it into the simple elements of the physical world, the English utilitarians set about the construction of an imposing edifice, in which psychology, ethics, politics and economy are to be deduced from a calculable interplay of elementary forces.

The theory of the association of ideas thus yields up the secret of its success. It represents the first thoroughgoing application of physics to the world of consciousness. Through it all the operations of mind have been reduced to various combinations of sensations and images. The transition from this psychology of association to the ethics of utility is easy and immediate. Desires set up in men's souls the competition of forces that are unequal, either from the quantitative point of view only, or at the same time by their quality, as the improved form of the doctrine would have it; with or without the intervention of an additional influence—the independent appreciation of an inner tact—desires are compounded among themselves, and the greater attraction of the most solid or the most justifiable inclination raises it to the status of a duty. The "computation of pleasures" is therefore a legitimate formula: it is indeed a question of arithmetical values. What is to the advantage of others comes as a pure source of enjoyment to souls of natural generosity; and thus altruism is an outcome of egoism.

The laws governing social life will be deduced in an equally easy way from one single principle. Priestley and Beccaria have provided Bentham with a maxim so obvious in itself and so powerfully suggestive, that his mind has received, as it were, the shock of a revelation: the greatest happiness of the greatest number, such shall be, and indeed must be, the guiding rule of a well-ordered government. The legislation of States, the régime of power, the penal code, the exercise of public authority, shall

be revised according to the exigencies of this sovereign end in view. The precedents, the privileges, the established interests, all the already traditional elements of English political empiricism, will have to submit to a daring scheme of reform, which, without losing the sense of what is possible, will know how to will and how to dare. The philosophical radicals set to work with determination along the lines which lead to an effective democracy.

The science of economics pursues the same ideal. In a perfect society, relieved from all that might impede the activity of any one member, the greatest possible amount of wealth springs from the free choice made by individual aptitudes, from a division of labour carried to its furthest limit, as well as from the effective functioning of a sort of automatic regulator—the law of supply and demand—which always directs production towards the most necessary objects. Competition is therefore the deep incentive to progress, and the eager pursuit of his own interests is the best way for a citizen to serve the community. Meanwhile the possession of lands of unequal fertility gives rise to a supplementary benefit called rent, to the profit of privileged owners, and in comparison with the income from the land which only brings in what has been expended upon it; in this way capital is formed, and the classes come into being—some of them reaping a reward from their ownership, and others from their labour; a more just distribution of wealth is not to be thought of. The wage-earners will compete among themselves in the labour market, and their salary will tend toward the limit compatible with the maintenance of life. Finally, with population increasing in geometrical, and foodstuffs in arithmetical ratio, the overcrowded earth would in one century be the scene of the most atrocious famine, if disease, poverty and war, acting in co-operation with deliberate foresight, did not restrict the generations of mankind. Ricardo and Malthus stamp economy with the character of an austere and stoical science, which is beneficial because it has the courage to show up the inexorable conditions of physical and social life.

These doctrines have a very wide and deep influence. They prepare the measures of a thought-out adaptation through which the Victorian order of things is gradually organised in a more modern spirit, and on the basis of a relative democracy. The

Radicals of 1820 are unable to put their programme entirely into practice, and they obtain only a partial satisfaction; the Chartists of 1848 will take up their formulæ, and struggle in vain to impose them. But the former, nevertheless, set up a trend of progress which gradually exhausts its impulse in the course of the century, and which establishes at the very core of Victorian balance a secret faculty of movement. From 1820 to 1835, their influence betrays itself in striking results, which stand out as landmarks in the political development of England: the cancelling of the laws against the workers' combinations (1824), the legal emancipation of Catholics (1829), the foundation of London University (1829), the first extension of the electoral franchise (1832), a reform in municipal administration (1834), the humanising of the penal code. These measures are passed through Parliament, before or after the Reform Act of 1832, by a minority of doctrinaire politicians, leavening the mass of what was formerly the Whig, and at that date becomes the Liberal party; and these politicians are themselves directly inspired by Bentham and James Mill.

3. *Sydney Smith; the Reviews.*—The whole country, however, was being won over to their cause, or at least sufficiently impressed by their arguments to accept those opportune concessions in which is seen the triumph of the English instinct of conservatism. The diffusion of their theses, the appeal to public opinion, are the work of men of a rather different stamp, who are much closer to the average British type of mind.

With Sydney Smith,[1] action is still connected with ideas. He is an educated man, of intellectual tastes; a cleric, he preaches, and treats of philosophy and morality with a measure of success. But the doctrinaire element is already wanting in his personality. We find in him the political instincts of the Whig tradition taking more definite shape and becoming more intensified; yet he remains a Whig, in all that the word implies: an essential moderation, a concrete grasp of problems, an individualistic liberalism.

Within these limits, his clear understanding can work all the

[1] Sydney Smith, 1771-1845, Anglican minister, was connected with the foundation of the *Edinburgh Review* (1802); he published numerous articles and political treatises, notably, *Letters on the Subject of the Catholics, to my Brother Abraham, who Lives in the Country, by Peter Plymley* (1807). See Chevrillon, *S. Smith et la renaissance des idées libérales en Angleterre, etc.*, 1894.

more surely. *Peter Plymley's Letters* are a model of skilful and effective persuasion. A generous thesis, its points pressed home as much by virtue of reason as by a kindliness of heart, is presented in such a way as to disarm prejudice, and appeal to the common sense and sympathy of the reader. Religious intolerance, the author says, is a survival from another age. Let us rid ourselves of all antiquated mistrust and hatred; the Catholics, the Irish are entitled to the freedom enjoyed by all; the very principles of Protestantism forbid that one should withhold this from them. And justice, he points out, will be the most able policy in unsettled times. For nations as for individuals, prudence is the best assurance of success. This defence becomes at times animated and spirited, but most often is controlled and displays an arch humour, and a realistic verve. It is the art of Swift, tempered and less strained, without the harsh vigour of a unique genius. Thus presented, there was a chance of success for the cause of which the utilitarians were the abstract defenders.

The great reviews of the modern type come into being at the same time; and henceforth play a conspicuous part in the moulding of literary opinion, while they exercise a political influence that is scarcely less important. Their effort, as a whole, has behind it one fixed and common idea: to satisfy the tastes of a cultured public, which is ever broadening; and to offer it, without causing its interest to flag or running counter to its prejudices, the mental stimulus required to give further definiteness and strength to its beliefs. Here we have a kind of intermediary degree between an independent polemic literature, and the press of to-day, which is too often incapable of any free reaction and which has to cater for its readers. British reviews have a doctrine, a general attitude, and support a party; but their anonymous articles leave a margin of liberty to their contributors: the authority they have acquired permits them to claim and possess a right of initiative, a moral autonomy; the personalities of editors, who are known to the public, add the final note to their individual characters; each represents at once a group of interests, a collective organ, and a single voice, to which the public gives ear, and which informs, instructs, advises and reprimands its audience.

These regular and permanent publications, while organising

opinion, provide writers with new facilities for essaying their talent, without running the risks, or incurring the expense, of publishing under their own names.

Originally, the reviews are organs of strife. Each has its own features. The *Edinburgh Review*, the first to be founded,[1] upholds the Liberal cause, has philosophic pretensions, but remains true to the Whig spirit. Its daring effort, wholly relative as it is, brings a rival into the field, the *Quarterly Review*,[2] which is out to defend the traditional orthodoxies. Opposed in politics, these two periodicals agree in condemning Lakist innovations in poetry; their doctrine is authoritative, their tone dogmatic; and the *Edinburgh* is not less violent in its defence of the sound principles of style, than the *Quarterly* in denouncing the enemies of Church and State. *Blackwood's Magazine*[3] engages *in a still more vigorous offensive against the adversaries of order* in art and society; and the *London Magazine* having widely opened up its columns to the Reformers, the editor of *Blackwood's* challenges and kills, in a duel, the editor of the *London*. . . . This is the climax of the struggle; polemical writing, from now onwards, without being less spirited, has less murderous results. By means of the *Westminster Review*,[4] the philosophical Radicals are able to gain a hearing, without rousing such passionate resentment. Incorporated in the national life, the reviews of the new style pursue henceforth their brilliant career, and supply the Victorian novel with its favourite mode of publication, by instalments.

4. *Cobbett.*—Cobbett[5] is a figure apart in the literary and

[1] In 1802 by Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, Brougham; a quarterly, its sales reached a total of nearly 14,000 copies in 1818.

[2] [illegible] in London by Walter Scott, with the help of Canning, Ellis, [illegible] ne sale as the *Edinburgh Review*.

[3] [illegible] by the publisher, Blackwood, and directed by [illegible]

[4] [illegible] Bowring and James Mill.

[5] [illegible] *the son of a Surrey farmer*, was self-educated; [illegible] l in England, he founded the *Weekly Political Register*, 1802, which became the organ of popular Radicalism Imprisoned for two years, and heavily fined, he retained the favour of a large public and combined the calling of agitator with that of an enthusiastic agriculturist; entered Parliament in 1832, died in 1835. His *Rural Rides*, taken from the *Political Register*, [illegible] which an *English Gram-* [illegible] *and Ireland*, etc. *Rural* [illegible] y A. M. D. Hughes, 1923 [illegible] tc.), 1913, studies by W. [illegible] *Sydney Smith*, etc., 1894; G. D. H. Cole, *Life of W. Cobbett*, 1925; [illegible] on, *Cobbett*, 1926.

political movement of his time. He is not a populariser, but an ingenuous disciple, an inventor after his fashion. His opinions are purely instinctive; he has no well thought-out principles, is not a reasoner, and views problems in a concrete light; but there is a vigour in his direct hold upon reality, and his influence is derived from the robust realism of his outlook. Beginning as a Tory, he evolves towards a programme of aggressive liberalism, under the stress of experience. He has nothing in common with the doctrinaire thinkers, nor is he in sympathy with them. His writings reveal a background of traditional and agrarian sentiment; he is a democrat in the sense in which the patriarchal régime of Old England allocated a better and more stable recognition to the peasant, than did the new industrial order. The egoism of the wealthy classes brings a strong note of levelling aspiration into his writings; nevertheless, he fully sympathises with an aristocracy that can understand its duties.

His work explains how for a time the action of the utilitarian philosophers was able to harmonise with the national temperament, and find an indirect support in the country people. The agricultural crisis, which from now onwards is a chronic fact, causes deep unrest among the rural classes; and to this Cobbett lends a voice that is popular and even vulgar, but endowed with a natural eloquence. Naïvely preoccupied with himself, he possesses all the charm of candid self-revelation. In a spontaneous prose, incapable of any logic or refinement, but wholesome and full of life, he narrates his *Rural Rides,* and with a kind of simple poetic felicity succeeds in calling up landscapes, as he depicts the manners of the people. His language is expressive, and even after a century has lost nothing of its freshness.

To be consulted: Albee, *History of English Utilitarianism,* 1902; *Cambridge History of English Literature,* vol. xi. chaps. ii. iii.; vol. xii. chap. vi.; Chevrillon, *Sydney Smith,* etc., 1894; Elton, *Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830,* 1920; E. Halévy, *La Formation du Radicalisme philosophique,* 1901-4; idem, *Histoire du peuple anglais au XIX[e] siècle,* vol. i. ii., 1913-23; L. Stephen, *The English Utilitarians,* 1900; idem, *Hours in a Library,* vol. iii. new edn., 1907.

CHAPTER IV

THE SECOND GENERATION OF POETS

1. *The Group and Its Surroundings.*—Three poets of the first order, distinct from those of the Lake school, and coming appreciably after them, constitute yet another natural group. The affinities which unite them are of a different kind, acting rather as a centrifugal force in the exterior plane of their destinies, instead of effecting a visible convergence of their courses. Byron, Shelley and Keats set out in various directions upon life's highways, each animated by the same impatient ardour. Their roads, however, end by meeting in that Italy which at this date is the chosen land of revolutionary spirits as of free artists. Had they lived, Venetia or Umbria might perchance have been to them, at least for a time, a selected and common sojourn, a Lake district. . . .

Without actually constituting a school, these writers offer so many points of close resemblance that one cannot but view them together. They represent indeed a poetic generation—the second in Romanticism. And just as they coalesce together, they belong to a broader background of facts. Their unity is consolidated and confirmed in an intellectual and social movement. Born as they were either, like Byron, just at the eve of the French Revolution, or like Shelley and Keats shortly after, they are not directly affected by its commotion; but the revolutionary ideas, passionately denounced or, as in certain spheres, not less passionately embraced, are everywhere rife, and could not possibly have left them untouched. And now it comes about that the general situation in England, after having strongly opposed the progress of these doctrines, adds to their force of attraction. The resumption of the Liberal agitation after 1815, the progress of utilitarian philosophy, the continuing state of political unrest in Europe after twenty-five years of upheaval, and the preparation for what was to be the ordered era of the Victorians by way of an unrest which would appear destructive of

order—such are the most apparent influences through which this new period favours the adhesion of young and ardent minds to the cause of progress. And at a first glance nothing seems more paradoxical than this hidden relationship which links up, so to speak, the democratic idealism of Shelley, the aristocratic individualism of Byron, and a state of social uncertainty, the most powerful cause of which is the secretly aggressive action of a middle class with a predominantly realistic outlook.

From the psychological point of view, which here again is the most significant, the second generation of poets also stand out against a background of relative complicity between their age and themselves. They mark the extreme degree reached by a phase of the moral rhythm; and they do not overstep the formula of this phase, even if they carry it to its limits. The particular intensity which the character of the period assumes in their pages even lends these writers a typical value, making their work in a sense representative. An inner need prompts the new literature to give free scope to all its possible effects. While already there is evidence of the corrective instinct, the searching after balance, the cycle opened up by the decisive victory of sentiment has not yet been traversed in its entirety. The exaltation of the faculty of feeling and imagination quickly subsided in the case of the Lake poets, being reconciled with the respect for an essential orthodoxy which re-established, even within the soul itself, the limits and restraining forces of prudence and faith. The logic of a revolt of passion against Reason has of necessity to lead it still further. This unlimited independence is expressed in diverse ways, through the free and rebellious element to be found in Byron's unmoral cynicism, in Shelley's ecstatic and humanitarian pantheism, as well as in the sensualism of Keats. Herein lies the germ of a moral anarchy, the full daring of which will hardly be roused until the close of the century. The new Romanticism which will come to disturb the closing years of the Victorian era will be the dauntless heir of that which had preceded it.

This liberation of the individual as regards all rules, and of emotion as regards a wisdom necessary to sound living, is indeed a diffuse tendency in other writers besides Byron, Keats and Shelley. One may say that with several of their contemporaries there is outlined an insurrection of repressed instincts; and that

an after taste of decadence permeates with a perceptible savour the literary efforts, the aspirations and the favourite moods of certain groups or circles. The revival of the Romanticism of terror with Maturin[1] is distinguished by a conspicuous liberty towards the susceptibilities of conscience. That attitude in Byron which has called for the name of "Satanism" answers to a peculiar fashion, and finds its imitators. The members of the "Cockney school," outside of Keats, profess some disdain for the conventionality with which Puritanism veils all that touches upon love; the erotic theme, with Leigh Hunt and his friends, is treated with a readiness suggestive of a certain defiance, and is related to political radicalism. Thomas Moore, more moderate in his opinions, is just as free in his light verse. Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* is a symptom of a new sincerity of outlook.[2] Indeed at the heart of this age there stirs an inclination to revolt against Christianity and all authoritative forms of discipline. But the rebellion of desire reveals itself for the most part indirectly; criticism of the official religion remains a private matter, since the everyday life of the people does not permit any free expression of opinion upon the subject. Shelley is expelled from Oxford for having written a tract on the "necessity of atheism"; even Byron prefers to voice his views in ironical language and by allusion. On the whole, the psychic revolt, which is represented by a Romanticism thus apparently freed from all inner restraints, transposes itself, and does not openly attack the solid pillars of the moral order; and this secret hesitation would point to the persistence of many repressions.

It could not be otherwise, if one takes into account the tone of the epoch. For, everything considered, England about 1820 is anything but revolutionary. While at this moment there are signs of a convergence between outstanding individuals and the average person of culture, such symptoms must not be exaggerated. The writers are already accentuating in a marked manner the claims of ordinary sensibilities, and this, no doubt, is an habitual fact; but among these writers themselves, the majority remain very far short of the bold and successful ventures which are the privilege of a few geniuses. Never has a group of very great poets been so clearly separated from the

[1] See above, chap. ii. sect. 2.
[2] For the group as a whole, see below, chap. v.

mass of general talent. One does not see, as in the days of the Renascence, the gift of lyricism and the desire for intellectual adventure bursting forth on all sides and at the same moment. Among the contemporaries of Byron, Shelley and Keats, one looks in vain for men in whom the diapason of imaginative life is raised to the same degree.[1] Compared with them, their immediate rivals look, as it were, like semi-Romanticists; their tone is calmer and more normal. So that these three form a group of magnificent exceptions, not only by the height of their art, but by the intensity of their psychological character.

Therefore it was long before public taste could adapt itself to their work; Byron, when once in the full possession of his powers, lost his native country and conquered Europe; throughout a whole generation, Keats and Shelley were neither recognised nor understood, save by an élite. Vital instinct in its fear erected against these rebellious geniuses a barrier which even sympathy could not break down. For, in pushing the virtual qualities of their epoch to a degree of realisation that was too complete, they had overstepped the limits. The reaction in literary taste, the inverse oscillation of the moral rhythm, and the search for balance, are in a large measure accelerated by the direct effect of their work; already the coming of such changes is felt at their very time. If placed in their proper historical perspective, they appear, among other aspects, as forerunners, as isolated figures. It is only at a much later date, and towards the end of the century, that whole groups of poets and writers will live and feel and spontaneously create at a pitch equivalent to the mental tone of a Byron, a Keats and a Shelley.

2. *Bryon.*—By the quality of his Romanticism, Bryon[2] is

[1] There is much of the same spirit in Beddoes, and a little in Darley, Hood, etc., at a slightly later date. See below, Book VI. chap. iv. sect. 3.

[2] George Gordon, of English origin through his father, and Scotch by his mother, born in London in 1788, was brought up in Scotland; inherited in 1798 the title of Lord Byron, and considerable wealth; studied at Harrow and Cambridge; published in 1807, after several essays, a volume of verse, *Hours of Idleness.* Arrogantly criticised in the *Edinburgh Review,* he replied with a sharp satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,* 1809. Now famous, he travelled in Spain and in the East, and on his return, published the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* 1812; *The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos,* 1813; *The Corsair, Lara,* 1814; *The Siege of Corinth, Parisina,* 1816. In 1816, after a year of married life, his wife left him for motives which have not yet been completely explained. Scandal, and the severity of public opinion, which caused a vague moral reprobation to crystallise round this wrong, made Byron decide to leave England (1816). He sojourned in Switzerland, settled in Venice, then in Ravenna. The influence of Italy and of the Countess Guiccioli showed itself in the choice of his subjects,

the most accessible of these three poets to foreign readers; he was the first to influence Europe, and had the widest action upon literature. He it is who best represents in English literature the *mal du siècle*, probably the most common feature of international Romanticism. The will to health, the moral success of the Lake poets, to which Coleridge is only a relative exception, are here replaced by an unconcealed disease, the source of suffering and a motive for pride, which cannot, and indeed will not, be cured. A deep analogy thus affiliates Byron with the spiritual posterity of Rousseau—with the Goethe of *Werther*, the Chateaubriand of *René*—making him in his turn one of the most active generators of a mental contagion that is freely spreading beyond the frontiers of nations.

Herein lies the dominant trait of his features. At the very centre of his being, there is an element of morbidity; the inner life built up on the full indulgence of emotion and desire reveals one of the current forms of its possible disintegration: the dispersion of the personality through the absence of an organic discipline among the motives and the acts. It would be hard to find a character of more energy than that of Byron; but he was never completely master of himself; his life and work offer us the picture of an essential duality. This wound, the pain of

the tone of his work and his political action He published the third canto of *Childe Harold*, 1816, and the fourth, 1818; *The Prisoner of Chillon*, 1816; *Manfred*, 1817; *Beppo*, 1818, *Mazeppa*, 1819, began *Don Juan*, 1819-24, which he left unfinished; except for this poem—and *The Lament of Tasso*, 1817; *The Prophecy of Dante*, 1821; *The Island*, 1823—he then turned to drama: *Cain*, *Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*, 1821, *Werner*, 1823, *Heaven and Earth*, 1824. He defended Pope and his school against Bowles, replied to an attack from Southey (*The Vision of Judgment*, 1822), sojourning at Pisa, then in Genoa, he was connected with the last episodes of Shelley's life (1822), and attempted a political collaboration with Leigh Hunt (*The Liberal*, 1822-3). After the failure of the Carbonari, he gave himself up to the cause of Greek independence, which he upheld morally, financially, and also in person (1823); he died at Missolonghi (April, 1824). *Works· Poetry*, ed. by E. H Coleridge; *Letters and Journals*, ed. by Prothero, 1898-1904; *Poet. Works*, ed. by E. H. Coleridge, 1905; *Poems and Plays*, Everyman's Library, etc., *Selections*, ed. by A H. Thompson, 1920. See the biographies by Th. Moore, 1831; Galt, 1830, Noel, 1890; E. C Mayne, 1892; M. Bellamy, 1924, etc.; and Medwin (*Conversations*, etc., 1824), Trelawny (*Recollections*, etc., 1858); the problem raised by Harriet Beecher Stowe (*Lady B. Vindicated*, 1870), taken up again by Lord Lovelace (*Astarte*, 1905), Edgcumbe (*B., the Last Phase*, 1910), Sir J. Fox (*The Byron Mystery*, 1924), etc.; the studies by Swinburne (*Essays and Studies*, 1875), M. Arnold (*Essays in Criticism*, 2nd Series, 1888); G. Brandes (*Main Currents*, etc.; vol. iv.), Ackermann, 1901; Estève (*B. et le romantisme français*, 1907); Hoops, 1903; Koeppel, 1903; Nichol (English Men of Letters, 1880); Fuess (*Lord B. as a Satirist in Verse*), 1913; C. T. Goode (*B. as Critic*), 1924; S. C. Chew (*B. in England, His Fame and Afterfame*), 1924; J. Drinkwater (*Byron, a Conflict*), 1925.

which he proudly parades throughout the world, is just the semi-pathological rupture of the tissue of tendencies, which has severed all connection between one part of himself and the other. Hence the seeming, and more than seeming, existence of a chronic insincerity, which intermingles with a sincerity that is very real and whole-hearted; hence errors and faults, the suffering born of these, and deeper than all regret, the intuition that these faults answer to the secret craving of a nature incapable of any peace, which finds no joy in them, but at the same time is unable to find it elsewhere. Byron definitely establishes in England the European type of the Romantic artist, whose art feeds on his very disease, who takes a voluptuous delight in self-reproach, and who weaves his remorse into a texture of beauty.

It would be wrong to say that his existence was one continual pose. The Fate which mapped out his destiny was only too real; and to this his bitterness, his pessimism, his irony bear sincere testimony. His divided soul was always able, on the one hand, to judge his acts, and on the other to judge his vain lucidity. This twofold play of instincts and impulses, this seeking after effects which comes from an intensity truly impassioned, this taste for cynicism which does not spare its own frankness—all have their most substantial unity in the imperious need of experience and of expression which governs all his being, and transmutes all his incurable contradictions into literature and poetry.

The logical bent of such a temperament leads it, if not to crime, at least to the serious violation of laws which it accepts in spite of itself but does not respect, as to the most precious source of that inner plenitude which could never be reaped from a docile subservience to mediocre rules; or, without necessitating an actual violation, to a half-real fiction, sufficient to create the thrill of reality, and to produce the dramatic situation of a challenge to the will of God and man. The moral life of Byron has its obscure spots, and a central mystery which he has himself taken pains to make conspicuous, just as much as he sought to render it still more impenetrable. That the solution to the problem should be found in incest is very probable; there is no doubt that he took a delight in rousing suspicions of this kind, and that his writings confirm and encourage them. Whether he really loved his half-sister, and actually looked upon such a

wrong as beyond atonement, one cannot at the present time *affirm; in any case the reality of the fault is of secondary importance.* The main point is that Byron was guilty in his heart, and wanted to be thought guilty; and further no fact or symbol could be more consistent with that imperious craving for a greatness and a strangeness in crime, a desire which his pride, still more fiercely than that of Chateaubriand, cherished within itself.[1]

His divided nature, howe[illegible] ative activities. Art was for [illegible] which all his tendencies could [illegible] last demonstration of his haughty courage, and the circumstances of his death, show him also fully active, sure of himself and reconciled with his conscience. And all the moral unrest of his stormy career cannot dim the splendour of a personality so admirably vigorous and richly endowed. Now that he appears in his true perspective, and when one has ceased to admire or disparage out of mere obedience to fashion, one sees more clearly that in himself, and in his marvellous gifts, there is the material that will resist the wear of time.

His literary personality was no less complicated. His instincts were fundamentally classical, in the sense that he did not conceive of fitness in form without an adequate precision, and sacrificed nothing to suggestion. He was deeply influenced by the Ancients, and still more by Pope and his school; he never repudiated this culture; on the contrary, he always proclaimed his indebtedness to it, setting it up in opposition to the new and tentative efforts of a Wordsworth or a Southey, on which he passed a very severe judgment. His first poems have a quality of rhythm and language which betrays at every turn the disciple of the eighteenth century; it is but barely that an original temperament, hungering for emotion, and bent upon dramatising life, can be discerned in them. When a wounded pride brought him self-revelation, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* made an impression through the harsh force of a satire modelled on the *Dunciad*, and in which the most ill-treated poets are the Lakists. Such remained his conscious tastes; and if in the end he felt the magnetism of a Shelley, he never believed that he himself broke away from tradition. A democrat through spite as well

[1] The publication of *Lord Byron's Correspondence, Chiefly with Lady Melbourne*, etc., 1922, seems to have practically settled the matter.

as generosity, but an aristocrat at heart, he despised Wordsworth's peasant prosaism, and what he regarded as the vulgarity of Keats. Among his contemporaries, he praised most highly the writers of a semi-conservative style, such as a Campbell or a Rogers. These were not mere superficial judgments; his entire nature is here involved; his career closes in a satirical realism, developed with a lucid perfection of form that is akin to the classical ideal. But a powerful Romanticism of the sensibility very quickly carries his art into wild adventurous domains, where it little avails him to continue the cult of his masters, or apply their lessons: for his poetry is made new by the irresistible outpouring of a wholly personal inspiration.

Not that he was much of an innovator in language or metre. He was never capable of shaping for his own use a faultless verbal instrument; to the very end, his style had its dross, its traces of automatism and affectation, its evidence of carelessness. His attempt at the archaic manner was not a successful venture in *Childe Harold;* rhetoric and abstraction are never far removed from his moral reflections. He has rather been a happy imitator than a creator of rhythms; he handles the short line of Scott, the Spenserian stanza, the blank verse, with honourable success; it is the "ottava rima" of *Beppo* and *Don Juan*, the swift and mocking stanza that so effectively carries and sets off a saucy intent, which most clearly bears his personal stamp. But he is a great writer by virtue of his energy of expression. At times it is a massive energy, compact, loaded to the full with sensations, evocative of realities or of primary emotions, rather than of delicate shades or dreams, unparalleled for the power of shock it can communicate to words, but at the same time not incapable of interpreting the splendour or grace of a landscape; at other times a more disciplined force, which restrains itself, and only spends and reveals itself in the pliable firmness with which an ironical design is sustained, developed and given precision in terms at once appropriate, effective and graphic. The Romanticist is better seen in the first range of effects; the classicist in the second; in his best style Byron tends to make these two aspects converge and amalgamate in a simplicity, vehement or sly, but always forceful.

His work is more varied than the simplified picture of his genius, retained in the memory of the general public, would

suggest. *Childe Harold* and the tales of the type of *The Giaour* may be regarded as a group, the best known, and the most actively influential in England and abroad. Here we have the development of the specially Byronic theme of a melancholy that is disenchanted and associated with all the vanity of human endeavour, as with the beauties of Nature; whether the scenic setting be taken from actual places, or from an East which the imagination is pleased to leave vague; whether history provides the plots, or fiction invents them. The first two cantos of *Childe Harold* attempt to link up this theme with the contemporary vogue of the mediæval past; but Byron's pilgrim knight is only a pretext; the last two cantos, with their more solid thought, a riper pathos and safer art, end by forgetting the existence of the said knight. From now onwards the poet imparts more life to his heroes, because he gives them more sincerely his own; the collection of these ill-fated and gloomy figures, which embody his Romantic feeling of himself, acquires a greater relief in his last portraits; the Manfred and the Cain of Byron represent not only the destiny of an individual stricken with remorse, but doubt, revolt, pessimism, all the impassioned negations or interrogations which constitute the philosophy of the *mal du siècle*. But here the tale in verse gives place to the drama and the mystery play.

The fanciful lure which a century ago wove itself round these tales, and the poignant poetry which clothed this melancholy procession of great images, have lost much of their power; the formula has been overdone, and a more critical age now perceives only too well the subjective arbitrariness which this attitude or doctrine involves. But if *Childe Harold* is now no more than a series of episodes, these at least often possess a striking vigour; the oratorical movement in the narrative turns into a note of lyrical eloquence when sustained by the personal feeling of the poet. The glory and the downfall of the past, too uniformly interpreted from a generalising point of view, behind the impersonality of which lies hidden an afterthought of self, are less soul-stirring, however, than the scenes from Nature. It is here that Byron is most original; without forgetting himself, he paints admirable pictures of the elements, in their calm and above all in their fury. The emotion infused in these landscapes is born of the delightful relaxing of a sorrow-laden soul, that yearns for

untrammelled expansion; in its moments of greatest ardour, this egoistical effusion borders on a mystic communion. In Byron we have a pantheism, very different from that of his contemporaries; the universe for him is a mysterious power, and an accomplice, looking benignly upon rebellious spirits because it ignores human orthodoxies; a help to souls in torment because it appeases them, and fortifies in them the bitterly strong feeling they have of themselves.

The Venetian tragedies, and *Sardanapalus*, are comparatively regular, and fairly classical in spirit; they suggest the influence of Alfieri. Despite their estimable merits, it is elsewhere that Byron displays the full dramatic force of his genius; on quite another scale are *Manfred* and *Cain*, where the action oversteps both reality and history to enter into the place of philosophical symbolism, and where the true drama sets the modern conscience and thought against traditional faith. Such was the judgment of Goethe, who allocated a place to the author of *Manfred* among the allegorical personages of the second part of *Faust*.[1]

In the last group of poems another Byron is shown. The doctrine of life is here the same, but is expressed in the lighter or corrosive tone of irony, and not in that of pathos. The sauciness which from the first had accompanied in an undertone the direct appeal to the reader's sympathy, now becomes dominant; inversely, the satire is at times interrupted in order to allow the tragic or idyllic moods to reappear. Steeped as he was in the literary atmosphere of Italy, Byron had drawn his inspiration from noble memories when he wrote *The Prophecy of Dante*, *The Lament of Tasso*; another element of this atmosphere, however, the sceptical gaiety of a society as witty as it is free from all restraint, was acting upon him in a contrary direction. At all times favourable to mock-heroic themes, Italian literature had very definite models to offer in the works of burlesque writers, from Pulci to Casti. After having tried his verve in *Beppo*, Byron gave full and much more ample vent to it in *Don Juan*.

As though a part of his temperament felt the strain of the moving intensity which he had sought so long, he henceforth turns to parody his former attitude; *Don Juan* is an ironic replica of the very subject of *Childe Harold*. The new hero is hardly more substantial; and the sequence of events is quite as boldly

[1] See Brandl, *Goethe's Verhältniss zu Byron* (*Goethe-Jahrbuch*, vol. xx., 1899).

made dependent on the poet's fancy. Of unequal merit, and in places dragging, but full of varied resources, the tale carries us to the most diverse parts of Europe, as to the extremities of fortune. The spirit which animates it is that of disabused experience, and of Voltaire's *Candide;* the literary practices of the eighteenth century are praised on every occasion; but not to mention the outbursts of passion or lyricism, there is here in the satire of society and manners a bitterness which implies that the heart is giving itself away. The note of inner Romanticism is unmistakable. The work abounds in brilliant pictures and witty digressions; the jocular vein in turn harsh, comic and by choice unexpected, has in it something reminiscent of Swift and Sterne; the whole savours, nevertheless, of undeniable originality. The choice of scenes, the philosophy of events, and the irreverent wisdom of numberless critical remarks, all are aimed against the system of conventional values in which humanity places its sincere belief or its instinctive cowardice of soul; and among all the pious or calculating lies, Byron singles out for his repeated strokes the false rigour of principles, the weight of which he had one day been made to feel by an English society which he had threatened with scandal.

Something of all these successive and in no way contradictory attitudes went to the making of "Byronism": their common essence. . . . According to the moment, and the nature of the person, such or such an element prevailed;[1] the ardent and the tragic poet alone had an appeal for Lamartine, whilst Musset, above all, delighted in the blasé master of mockery. Under one form or another, the wave of influence emanating from Byron was mingled with the current of French Romanticism itself.

3. *Shelley.*—Of a shorter span than that of Byron, and concentrated within some ten years, Shelley's poetical career[2] per-

[1] For France see Estève, *Byron et le romantisme français*, 1907; for the influence of "Byronism" in Europe, etc., see a bibliographical summary in Elton, *A Survey*, etc. (1780-1830), vol. ii., pp. 419-20.

[2] Percy Bysshe Shelley, born in 1792, in Sussex, of a family of rural gentry, studied at Eton, then at Oxford, from which he was expelled on account of his religious opinions; married Harriet Westbrook (1811), adopted the philosophical ideas of Godwin; after several attempts in verse (*Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire*, 1810, etc.), and in prose (*Zastrozzi*, 1810; *St. Irvyne*, 1811, etc.), he wrote a philosophical poem, *Queen Mab* (published 1813); parted with his wife, and left England with Mary Godwin, daughter of the philosopher; on his return he wrote *Alastor*, 1816; then sojourned with Byron in Switzerland, 1816; composed a

mits, however, of being divided up into stages; it is possible and instructive to follow its development. But a study of this kind would demand minute detail. A summary appreciation must here examine it as a whole.

Shelley's life was one of passionate devotion to intellect, and this ardour explains how his ideas were *transmuted into poetry*. However, this intellectual stamp is too strongly marked upon him for one to neglect the doctrine which he embraced, and to which he gave himself with a true and deep zeal. Here again, one can witness a process of change, a progress in many-sidedness and in flexibility; but one perceives no serious deviation, and unity predominates. Shelley was taught by experience, without being forced to disavow his principles. His early death makes it hardly possible to settle the question; he seems, however, to have belonged to that rare species of mankind whom reason and feeling convert into revolutionaries in the flush of youth, and who remain so for the rest of their lives.

The work of feeling this was, as much as that of reason. Of a sensitive, highly strung nature, Shelley was stirred at an early age by the spirit of revolt; from a boy's miseries he reaped a

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symbolic and revolutionary epic (*Laon and Cythna*, remodelled under the title of *The Revolt of Islam*, 1818); after the suicide of his wife (1816), his second marriage, and before the judiciary finding which refused him the guardianship of his children, he definitively left England for Italy (1818), resided at Venice, Rome, Pisa, etc., published *Rosalind and Helen*, 1819; a tragedy, *The Cenci*, 1819; a lyrical drama, *Prometheus Unbound*, 1820; a satirical drama, *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, 1820; a poem, *Epipsychidion*, 1821; an elegy on the death of Keats, *Adonais*, 1821; a lyric drama on the theme of Greek independence, *Hellas*, 1822; in July, 1822, he died in the Gulf of Spezzia during a storm, through drowning, and perhaps was assassinated by pirates. He left, in addition to the above-mentioned works, numerous poems, published during his lifetime or after his death, among which satires: *The Masque of Anarchy, Peter Bell the Third;* lyrical pieces: *The Sensitive Plant, The Witch of Atlas, Ode to the West Wind, The Cloud, The Triumph of Life,* etc.; prose writings, among which, *A Defence of Poetry*, 1821. *Works in Verse and Prose*, ed. by Forman, 1880; *Complete Poet. Works*, ed. by Hutchinson, 1907; *Poems*, ed. by Locock, 1911; ed. by Koszul (Everyman's Library); *Lyrical Poems*, etc., *Dramatic Poems*, ed. by Herford, 1917-22; *Literary and Philosophical Criticism*, ed. by Shawcross, 1911; *Letters*, ed. by Ingpen, 1912. See biographies by Medwin (ed. by Forman, 1913), Hogg (ed. by Dowden, 1906); Sharp, 1887; Dowden, 1896; information in Trelawny (*Recollections*, etc., ed. by Dowden, 1906; *Records*, etc., 1878); studies by Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, 2nd Series, 1888; Sarrazin, *Poètes Mod. d'Angleterre*, 1885; Rabbe, 1887; Symonds, 1887; Richter, 1898; Chevrillon, *Études Anglaises*, 1901; Kroder, 1903 (on metre); Ackermann, 1906; Francis Thompson, 1909; Clutton-Brock, 1910; Koszul, *La Jeunesse de Shelley*, 1910; Salt, 1913; Osborn, 1919; Strong, 1921; M. L. G. de Courten, *Shelley e l'Italia*, 1924; O. W. Campbell, *Shelley and the Unromantics*, 1924; W. E. Peck, *Shelley, His Life and Work*, 1927; M. T. Solve, *Shelley, His Theory of Poetry*, 1927.

sense of cruelty and injustice; the fever of adolescence, an already mystical intuition of what true faith could and should be, the contagious influence of French ideas then in the air, made of him from his University days one of those pure believers who are chilled by the semi-sceptical coldness of orthodoxy, and who give their own burning zeal the name of irreligion. Godwin then provided him with a system; he took it, made it his own, and scarcely perceived that he was gradually altering its very essence. The doctrine of "necessity," or absolute determinism, now became a profession of warm hope in the moral liberty of a will addicted to goodness; anarchical individualism inclined more definitely towards a humanitarian brotherhood and the authority of the wise; nugatory rationalism became transformed into a desperate affirmation of intuitive truths, and atheistic materialism developed into an idealistic pantheism.

Diverse tendencies had coexisted in Godwin himself; by allowing certain of these full play, Shelley believed that he was still faithful to the teaching of his master, and this belief was not entirely illusory. In its active conclusions, the doctrine which animates his poems actually traces out a parallel furrow; it represents a philosophical and a social force working in the same direction. Thus spiritualised, the gospel of Godwin became Shelley's own belief; in it the instincts of his being found an echoing response, and it is the cause which he never ceased to serve. Whatever the judgments one may pass on certain of his acts, one is forced to recognise in this unshaken devotion of both mind and conduct the courage and sincerity of his moral life.

His work must be organised round this central desire for theoretical expression. Several groups correspond to unequal degrees of doctrinal tension or of dominant intellectuality. There are the writings in which demonstration is the chief feature, whether their very structure is by far too didactic in character, or whether the art which clothes the thesis with imagery, emotional colouring or a symbolical atmosphere is unable to acquire full independence. The first two great poems of Shelley, *Queen Mab* and *Laon and Cythna,* while they clothe his originality, do not allow it to develop freely; one feels that the obsession of the mind by ideas which are in themselves aggressive and polemical goes to destroy the serenity of taste, and paralyses it in its choice of the elements of beauty. It is not actually on account of their

doctrine that these allegories of the emancipation of mankind through revolutionary reason, or again of heroic apostolate in its struggle with violence, are relatively inferior, but by the quality of the effort which lends it imaginative expression. They are, however, far from being devoid of significance. Quite different is the case with the prose writings, in which the importance of form is very substantially reduced, while the thought can in all legitimacy present itself with no decorative vestment of words. The essays of Shelley are not works of the first order; but they show cogency and lucidity; and one of them, *A Defence of Poetry*, in a tone of eloquence that is still demonstrative, unites the pressing rigour of reasoning with the strong and infectious vehemence of passion.

In another class of poems the same enthusiasm of thought is expressed, but effectively incorporated either with visions and symbols, or with a definite emotion and a concrete theme. Here it is that Shelley shows himself a master of philosophical, political and elegiac poetry. In *Alastor* this perfect balance is attempted, but not with genuine success; an over-exuberant imagination pours itself forth and covers up the inner purpose of the work almost to the point of concealment. In at best a hardly coherent outline is traced the figurative destiny of a noble, restless soul whom the witchery of solitude attracts and destroys, while meaner creatures are encouraged and fortified in their weakness by mutual support. The *Moïse* of Vigny develops a somewhat analogous theme. Shelley is nowhere so purely a Romanticist; the ardour and anguish of a vague desire, the splendour of the universe, and the secret languor mingled with the ecstasies which Nature pours out, have never been more vividly expressed. *Prometheus Unbound* is the richest and most beautiful fusion of the doctrine with a suggestive complex of emotions and images. By altering the ancient Greek myth, and infusing it with a wholly modern thought, the poet draws from it the magnificent illustration of the victory which the genius of man pursues even through suffering, and which he will win over the powers of evil by virtue of the force of love. The setting of this cosmic drama, its actors, its incidents, the pains and the joys of a world oppressed by the tyranny of Heaven and restored to its primal purity by a supreme act of liberation, all bear the touch of a sovereign grandeur, of a pathos vast in its scope, of a bright

or graceful magic, without either the contours of the symbol or the more spiritual features of the idea losing their vigorous note. Of kindred quality are the elegy where Shelley in the person of Keats weeps over but above all exalts the sacred victims of immortal idealism (*Adonais*); and the touching evocation of the sure triumph of Hellenic independence (*Hellas*). To this group of masterpieces should be added the political satires, where the doctrinal zeal of the writer is curbed to a more concrete exposition, while the disciplined emotion allows of an art, the more firm for its soberness, as in *The Mask of Anarchy*.

Lastly, the poems of pure effusion no longer express Shelley's ideas in a direct manner. Ideas, however, are not far to seek, for the unfolding of the imagery and the contagious power of the feeling call them forth by a more or less imperious and subtle affinity; but the poetry is first and foremost vision, emotion and music; what it suggests to the intelligence is an element of its own prestige, a further note in its inner resonance, not its main motive and source. And here we have the vast domain of lyricism, in which Shelley reigns supreme. First there are some longer poems, where the composition, however free its flow, obeys a fixed plan, in which the logical mind has still its part: *The Witch of Atlas*, the capricious play of an enchanted imagination, which under the enthralling and fleeting succession of forms probably pursues the ever active spirit that animates Nature; *The Triumph of Life*, where according to some obscure scheme, which the poem, if completed, would have made clearer, the pageant of Life emerges and passes before our eyes, spreading along its track the illusion of a distinct existence; *Epipsychidion*, that effusion of Platonic and passionate love, the flights and ardour of which are directed by a definite mysticism. Next come the admirable series of lyrical "moments," either self-sufficient—poems of a day, or an hour, where a creative emotion embodies itself in the images and melodies which can make us realise and share it; or more or less connected with a whole, such as the choruses and songs of *Hellas* and *Prometheus*.

Shelley's lyricism is incomparable. In no other do we find the perfect sureness, the triumphant rapidity of this upward flight, this soaring height, the superterrestrial quality as well as the poignant intensity of the sounds which fall from these aerial regions. Truly, never was the soul of a poet so spontaneously

lyrical—in the modern sense in which the word no longer implies a concentrated purpose of learned, harmonious and noble exaltation, but the immediate and complete vibration of a naturally vocal sensibility in contact with the world. Everything with Shelley is the occasion for a musical stir, since his powers of feeling are the keenest attuned and most delicate of this age; sensation, like emotion, with him oversteps the normal diapason, moving in a higher scale; the susceptibility of his physical and moral organism is such, that his work bears throughout the diffused traces of a kind of psychological morbidness—the meeting of extremes, the confusion of different domains, the inversion of senses and values, etc. There subsists an energy, if not always a virility, in this somewhat enervating atmosphere, where the fibres of inner being are strung almost to breaking point; the tone of Shelley's poetry is not that of a voluptuous sensuality, but of a keen aspiration, in which mystical desire, with its anguished pangs and spiritual raptures, transcends the joys and sufferings of ordinary mankind. The unattainable aim of these efforts is the impossible return of individual life to the whole, with which the poet's thrilling intuition seizes his essential kinship. Pantheism is here a living faith, ardently realised through direct knowledge, at the same time as it is conceived by reason. A divine immanence sheds its rays throughout the universe, illuminating from within the heaviest mass of matter; everything is light, just as everything is life; but at the very core of things Shelley's idealism puts love, and Plato is equally his master with Spinoza. No philosophy makes either more easy or more true that intimate fusion of Nature and mind which is actually the method of modern lyricism.

In this way have been created the wondrous myths and the cosmic schemes in which the elements, the planets, and on a less superhuman scale, the clouds and the west wind, become quickened with their individual existence, and speak a language that we can understand; in this way are rendered possible the minute wonders of imaginative sympathy, which can evoke a whole silent drama in the flowering corner of some deserted garden, or express the rapturous song of the lark, the numb happy consciousness of the glowworm. But in spite of this infinite diffusion of its soul, the most taking notes of Shelley's lyricism are those where, mingling with the serene choir of all

Nature, we hear the human lament of one who foresees and remembers, limited in his strength and even in his love, mourning for those ecstasies that are too rare, for the fleeting apparitions of "intellectual beauty" and "the spirit of joy."

Whatever the voice which speaks to us, Shelley has the gift of lending it the sweetest and most liquid harmonies, not the most sonorous and sensual, but pure in their vehement intensity. A delicious sadness emanates from this blending of notes, now high and now low, but always in a minor key; and the song they compose is the very utterance of the wounded sensibility which the divorce of action and a too lofty desire has given not only to Romanticism, but to the modern age. The flowing ease with which the words merge into one another, at the same time as the ideas they call forth join up together, goes to prove that for Shelley, the most poetical of poets, the psychological melody and the cadence of syllables, as spontaneous the one as the other, naturally formed but one music. He has experimented with all rhythms; the suppleness and variety of his prosody are extraordinary; the Spenserian stanza of *Adonais*, the "terza rima" of *The Triumph of Life*, the metrical combinations of *Prometheus*, are the variations of a master upon accepted themes, or the inventions of an original genius. Even when the form testifies to the poet's negligence, and as it were to his impatience, when it lacks the finish only to be acquired from an industrious art, it retains the felicity of inspired expression; and that language, like that measure, so individual, through their characteristic turn, their liquid but ever undulating flow, which is a continual creation, and not the forced adaptation of a rhythmic utterance to a preconceived framework, convey to us the poignant impression of contact with the innermost pulsations of the artist's heart.

There are yet other sides to Shelley's art. By a true miracle, this lyric poet, so essentially personal, succeeded in writing a great drama. Or rather, this escape from self which the intuitive penetration of other lives involves made it possible for him, by attaching himself to them, penetrating into their recesses, and developing them for their own sakes, to attain without effort to the objectivity of drama. *The Cenci* is a tragedy of sombre pathos, where the fascination of crime and the energy of heroic innocence are thrown into relief with a vigour, and

frequently also with a sobriety, which, while recalling the exuberance of the Elizabethans, do not allow any slackening of the means in the command of a meditative and concentrated art. There was in Shelley, in germ, a whole development in this direction, as is proved by a fragment, *Charles I.*[1] There was also a capacity for escaping the wearing intensity of lyricism, or the tension of philosophical zeal, by way of the familiar playfulness, the free expansion of a personal self which yet is determined and able to keep its deeper secrets inviolate; and these epistles, these conversations in verse have a particular charm of their own, just as they possess a special quality of language. The relaxing of inspiration leads Shelley back from his customary and indeed sincere vein, a romantic one, to a plane of his moral being which is no doubt more superficial, but where is revealed the classical gift of exactness joined to simplicity in style (*Rosalind and Helen, Julian and Maddalo,* etc.).

He remains, above all, a lyric poet, the greatest that England or perhaps modern Europe has produced. His influence, in the beginning, was confined to an élite; Browning and Tennyson came strongly under his spell; since then, it has spread, and become a great force in literature, extending to foreign countries, where through certain affinities it has found a way to some talented writers; the French symbolists were not unacquainted with Shelley's work. He is, however, easily accessible only to such minds as are independent, sensitive and subtle, and capable of rediscovering in themselves something of the freshness and wonder of primitive man.

[1] The 19th century, after the long decadence which filled the 18th (see above, Book III. chap. iv.), shows the almost complete eclipse of original dramatic production in England. The divorce between the theatre and life is accentuated; the noteworthy dramas of this period are historical, philosophical, and poetical works, which appeal to the imagination, to the reflection, and not to the eye. Despite the difference in kind, the gulf is not very great between the *Prometheus Unbound* of Shelley, the *Cain* of Byron, and the plays of Tennyson and Browning. The *Cenci* of Shelley assumes an exceptional value from this point of view; staged recently, it made a very strong impression. The great successes which one could mention in connection with the Romantic age (the *Virginius,* 1820, the *William Tell,* 1825, of James Sheridan Knowles, 1784-1862; the *Mirandola* [1821] of Proctor ["Barry Cornwall"], 1787-1874) owe much to the talent of eminent actors, Kemble and Macready. From now onwards, and for the space of two generations, the most genuine dramatic inspiration is to be found in the inquiries of pure psychology, in the ideal oppositions of character; *Imaginary Conversations* of Landor (see below, chap. v.), *Monologues* of Browning (see Book VI chap. iv.), etc. The revival of the theatre at the end of the 19th century will be brought about by the re-established contact between the stage with its concrete exigencies, and the moral passions of the times, under the form permitted by the "problem play," and the social drama.

4. *Keats.*—The figure and the work of Keats[1] bear the mark of a miraculous youth, cut short by death just when it had attained a precocious maturity; he lived a little longer than twenty-five years. With surprisingly rapid progress he passed from early efforts full of promise to masterpieces. One may therefore distinguish only two successive moments in his poetry. And to the student of his verse all else tends to lose significance beside the originality, the vigour of a temperament of unequalled gifts.

In a social circle where nothing seemed to herald such a growth, and which, if it did not actually stifle it, afforded it only a very meagre support; without the high culture of a University, but with the lessons of a teacher and friend alike, there developed an ardent vocation, a passionate love for beauty. An instinctive desire first and foremost, implanted in a nature that is highly sensual. But the æstheticism of Keats has also an intellectual side. No one has ever reaped such a rich harvest of thought out of the suggestions which life had to offer; through reading, and a thirst for knowledge, he became acquainted with Greece, paganism and ancient art, or conjured up in his imagination all that these stood for; he became impregnated with Hellenism, having nothing of the erudite about him, but rather the naïvety, the trifling errors, the penetrating and exact intui-

[1] John Keats, born in London, in 1795, came of a family of modest condition; an orphan at 15 years of age, he was first intended for a medical career, but gave himself up entirely to poetry. With no encouragement save the friendship of Leigh Hunt, of Haydon, the painter, etc., he published in 1817 a volume of *Poems;* in 1818; *Endymion: A Poetic Romance,* in 1820, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St.* [illegible], and *Other Poems.* A second version of one of these, *Hyperion,* appeared in [illegible] hostile to Keats, but if he [illegible] cause his death. The year [illegible] ng point in his brief career. [illegible] Italy, and died in Rome in [illegible] e. *Complete Works,* ed. by H. Buxton Forman, 1901; *Poetical Works,* ed. by H. B. Forman, 1908; ed. by de Sélincourt, 1912; ed. by Colvin, 1915; *Odes,* ed. by Downer, 1897; *Odes, Lyrics and Sonnets,* ed. by Hills, 1916; *Selected Poems,* ed by Symons, 1907; *Letters,* ed by [illegible] by Williamson, 1914. See biographies [illegible]; Colvin (English Men of Letters), [illegible] k, 1908; notes in Leigh Hunt, *Auto-* [illegible] *Modernes d'Angleterre*), 1885; Texte [illegible] thesis of Angellier, 1892; Suddard [illegible] *vie et œuvre,* 1910; *An Essay on Keats's Treatment of the Heroic Rhythm,* 1909); Fausset (*Keats, a Study in Development*), 1922; A. Lowell (*J. Keats, a Biography*), 1925; J. Middleton Murry (*Keats and Shakespeare*), 1925; C. D. Thorpe (*The Mind of J. Keats*), 1926; H. W. Garrod (*John Keats*), 1926.

tional powers of a self-taught genius. He read the writers of the Renascence, loved and cultivated Spenser, Chapman, Fletcher, Milton. How closely the cult of Shakespeare was interwoven with the tenor of his thought can be seen from his private letters. Wordsworth he admired most of all among his contemporary writers, although the closest influence was that of Leigh Hunt, to whom he was indebted for something of his first manner.

From all these elements, Keats builds up for himself a personal store of reflections and ideas; his intellectual ambition is high; he realises what is lacking in his nature, and is determined to acquire a philosophy. Religion for him takes definite shape at an early age, in the adoration of the beautiful. But this adoration he elaborates into a doctrine: Beauty is the supreme Truth; it is imagination that discovers it, and scientific reasoning, armed as it is to analyse and dissect, is an altogether inferior instrument of knowledge. This idealism, probably encouraged by the teaching of Coleridge, easily assumes a note of mysticism; one can see a sustained allegory in *Endymion;* and certain passages are most surely possessed of a symbolical value. On the other hand, the religion of beauty is here more pagan, more free than it will be with Ruskin and his disciples; although it has not the character of absolute indifference with regard to moral principles, which æstheticism will show towards the end of the century. Despite certain traces of commonness which his work has almost entirely eliminated, there is in Keats a delicacy of the senses as of feeling; there is even a diffuse puritanism, to which his early environment had unconsciously accustomed him, and which his relations with the circle of Leigh Hunt had weakened but not destroyed. An inherent generosity, a nobility of soul to which his life as well as his work bears testimony, finally decide his career as a writer: he will have a mission to perform, a duty to fulfil. His social and religious ideas are critical and independent; on the whole, this dreamer, this pure artist was in spiritual sympathy with the Radicals of his day. But he consecrated his endeavours to a positive task; his intention was to serve, through the medium of poetry, the cause of a moral progress in which he believed. The pessimism, and the voluptuous irresponsibility which often emanate from his lines, must not hide from us his genuine adhesion to the notion—almost universally

accepted at that time in England—of a priesthood in literature.

It would, however, be paradoxical to lay the main emphasis upon these conscious desires of the poet. There is in the culture of Keats a deficiency, resulting from his incomplete education; he explored the world of ideas by the aid of a keen intellectual curiosity, an upright judgment, but also with a slight inexperience. No doubt his maturity would have given definite shape to the intentions of his early years; they remain, as we know them, somewhat vague and shifting. Despite the sincerity of his effort, his doctrine is neither very coherent nor very original. To insist too much upon it is to be unjust to his work; indeed it is not through it that his poetry will live.

Keats is pre-eminently a man of sensations, with whom the very activities of intelligence bring into play concrete notions, images and qualities. Thanks to a principle of choice with which the intuition of genius gradually furnishes him, he makes his way towards the ideal of balance which is that of perfect classicism, having started from no other principle than that of Romantic intensity. His art is full of passion; it is above all aspiration and desire; and the object of this desire is not the "intellectual beauty" of Shelley, but that which reveals itself to the enchantment of the senses. It is easy to discern in his work the whole gamut of sensations, set off by a richness and a softness of colouring which reveal the complacency of a refined fondness. With nothing suggestive of animality or violence, in a spirit of pagan wisdom in which, it is true, there is discernible the tremor of a kind of very modern eagerness, the cup of voluptuousness which Nature offers to mankind is tasted by a sensibility which finds in every drop the food for poetic thought. Pleasure becomes spiritualised into joy, and the joy becomes irradiated with beauty. Emotion has its share in this feast of the senses; Keats is by no means the epicurean according to whom true enjoyment of life is secured only through a calm and detached reasonableness; he himself has known the pain, the fever of passion. But this deepening of the inner resonance of the soul is hardly to be found save in his masterpieces, as in his later years; in his early poems, love is depicted with a somewhat exterior energy, as well as a deliquescent languor.

Herein appears the wonder of his so speedy development,

guided as it was by a sure and seemingly infallible instinct. At the beginning, he had nearly all the faults of his qualities. *Endymion,* despite admirable passages, represents the error of an undisciplined genius: which is seriously threatened by an habitual failing of the tact itself of æsthetic perception. The future of such a mind might seem anything but safe. The poet is dazzled by his own ardour, which leads him to diffuse his attention over mere details, making him lose his sense of organised wholes; the contours of the landscape, just as those of the action, are confused and blurred; in a hot and heavy atmosphere, there rises a vapour which bewitches the will-power, distorts the vision, and lends every perspective the strange and disquieting effect of a mirage. An overwealthy imagination multiplies the descriptive features; an overstrung sensibility carries each notation to the extreme; and a design of seductive grace and conscious charm is expressed in a language which is often artificial, loaded with elaborate ornaments, with rare, archaic or affected epithets. The whole savours at the same time of over-refinement of profusion, of the strain of an ever-present intensity, and finally somewhat of morbidness; one feels in it an uncertain taste, and the effort of a literary endeavour heroically carried through against an inspiration that is at times rebellious. Yet, from this disappointing and fatiguing work, there radiates out a youthful enthusiasm so genuine and contagious, as to leave an ineffaceable impression upon the reader.

This exuberance, however, is of short duration, and the incertitude of the poet in his art gives place to the assurance of self-mastery. Not that a transition cannot be felt; *Lamia,* for example, is not free from the failings which marked the first manner. Again, among the masterpieces, everything is not on the same level. It is still permissible to judge as too ornate, and somewhat decadent in style, the delightful legend of *The Eve of Saint Agnes;* in the pathos of *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil,* all the notes are not of an equal sureness, and elements of too great a diversity are blended but imperfectly. Keats at his best supplies the matter for only a very small collection of poems: the original version of *Hyperion,* almost all the *Odes,* *La Belle Dame sans Merci,* and the most beautiful sonnets. . . . Here asserts itself a wonderful realisation of what sobriety can

be in its fusion with the force of touch and the wealth of expression. Keats effects that rare union of classical discipline, guided by the example and precepts of the Ancients, with the more intrinsically precious matter which the artist finds in Romanticism. The exigence of perfection is there, but also *at the same time all* the positive substance of which poetry had long since been emptied by a school *of correctness based upon Reason; the attempt* of a Collins is again taken up, but is carried much further; a stronger force of selection, of order and harmony is brought to bear on an unlimited range of revivified sensations and emotions. Nothing could be more truly Romantic, nor could the very figure of antiquity be animated with more concrete life.

Hyperion is an epic poem in which Keats, competing with Milton on a footing of equality, desires to relate the celestial revolutions of pagan mythology, as did Milton the Christian cycle of a paradise lost and regained. Keats's enterprise is of a bolder and more dangerous character, for the elements of interest which his subject offers are of a still more austere and less human order; but while his imagination is no less powerful, it displays a more plastic quality than that of his great forerunner. Scarcely outlined as it is, but already arresting by the vastness of conception which it promises, as by its visions of a gigantic and primitive world, this work stands out in wondrous majesty.

The favourite themes in Keat's Romanticism are set in the *Odes* in short and elaborate forms, constructed with harmonious skill: the sculptural grace of Greek attitudes, the nostalgy of the charming myths of Hellas, the changing seasons and the joys of the earth, the anguished yearnings of the soul to find a beauty which endures; and with this "Dionysian" inspiration is fused the bitter-sweet voluptuousness enclosed in the impassioned meditation of death. Everything here co-operates to enchant a sensual and dreamy contemplation: the outlines, the colour, the emotion and the melody; the tone has a smooth suavity, and yet is free from any excess of softness or ease: indeed it is constantly relieved by notes of vigour. The most original character of this art is its density; each epithet is extraordinarily rich in suggestion; the long lingering of each word in a thought which lovingly enfolds it, has loaded it with a whole spiritual crystallisation.

Each of the images, which by an exquisite tact have been selected from among the most evocative, opens up to our view a far-reaching perspective. In these poems of his maturity, the language of Keats scintillates with all the gems of speech, without their brilliance predominating over the conciseness and nervous exactness of the whole. The rhythms, handled by an artist who is alive to the power of music, are not so much new creations, as perfect adaptations to the supreme unity of an impression.

It is useless to remember here the doctrinal purpose which the poet may have framed for himself in the resolutions of his early years. The confessions of these lines are quite other in their candour. A life founded upon sensation reveals the secret of its ultimate melancholy. Without pushing too far our inductions from the texts, we must see in them the seed of that psychological morbidness of which the century, then in its opening period, was to witness the gradual development; the pain of joy, and the joy of pain, are already sounded by Keats, and passion itself becomes conscious of the cruelty which hides in some of its ardours. English Romanticism attains in Keats the final stage of its progress; and this pessimism is deeper and more significant than that of Byron: it has not its secret source in any tragic mystery, and it is thus much more inevitable. It springs from the satiety of a soul which yet has made no demands upon the more common joys of life; it is made up of the unconquerable feeling of the fragility of beautiful forms, as of the vanity of the effort through which desire seeks to transcend itself. In its bitter realism, its clear-sighted sadness, clothed in harmonies both sumptuous and full, the *Ode on Melancholy* has a foretaste of the *Fleurs du Mal*.

Keats, when he died, gave promise of becoming the greatest poet of his generation; and one who, better than any other, would have united the free inspiration of Romanticism with the formal principle of the schools of the past. Some hundreds of lines raise him to the level of the highest. His influence has never ceased to grow; all those schools which claim as their principle a plastic notion of art have seen in him their master; the Pre-Raphaelites, just as the English Æsthetes, originate in part from him. Despite the concentrated and difficult quality of his language, the finer artists, in every nation, have felt the magnetic power of his example.

To be consulted: Brandes, *Die Hauptstromungen*, etc., vol. iv., 1876 (English translation [*Main Currents*, etc.], 1905); *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. xii, chaps. ii, iii, iv.; Elton, *Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830*, 1920; Estève, *Byron et le romantisme français*, 1907; E. Halévy, *Histoire du Peuple Anglais au XIXe Siècle*, vols. i and ii., 1913-23; Leigh Hunt, *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, 1828; idem, *Autobiography*, 1850; A. Koszul, *La Jeunesse de Shelley*, 1910; Th. Moore, *The Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, 1830; J. Middleton Murry, *Keats and Shakespeare*, 1925; Pierce, *Currents and Eddies in the English Romantic Generation*, 1919; Schelling, *The English Lyric*, 1913; Symons, *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry*, 1909; Taine, *Hist. de la Littérature anglaise*, vol. iv., 1864; Trelawny, *Recollections*, etc., 1858; E. E. Williams, *Journal*, etc., 1902.

CHAPTER V

THE SEMI-ROMANTICISTS

Among the contemporaries of Coleridge and Shelley, the figures of secondary importance, whose lights pale before the brilliance of exceptional geniuses, are nevertheless of keen interest. The work of these writers does not offer in the same degree the character of passionate imagination. They belong to their time, but do not bear its single stamp with imperative definiteness. While classifying them at their places and in their generation, one may call them "semi-Romanticists." They reveal both the persistence of certain psychological elements inherited from classicism, and already the first signs of a moral transition which will raise against Romanticism a deep literary reaction. With them the classical temperament persists more or less, in some traits, and under some forms; while there are indications on the other hand of a search for a new standard of balance, where a sobered Romanticism will enter as an element in a rational synthesis of art and life. Their complex features derive an added attraction from this variety; and indeed the inferiority of their individual note in literature is wholly relative; several among them possess, in their mixed quality, a remarkable vigour.

1. *The Poets: Rogers, Moore, etc.*—One is accustomed to link up Rogers [1] with the past. His nature, in fact, like that of Campbell,[2] bears the indelible stamp of tradition. But he shows more suppleness, and better succeeds in keeping pace with his time.

Yet, never has fame fallen so low. Rogers expiates in excessive discredit an exaggerated favour, the result of a transitory harmony with the average taste of his epoch. He was the idol

[1] Samuel Rogers (1763-1855), son of a banker, led the life of a financier, a rich and generous patron of letters, a poet of great repute, mixed with the literary society of his time. *The Pleasures of Memory*, 1792; *Epistle to a Friend, with Other Poems*, 1798; *Jacqueline*, 1814; *Human Life*, 1819; *Italy*, 1822-28. *Reminiscences and Table Talk*, ed. by Powell, 1903. *Poetical Works*, ed. by Bell, 1875; *Italy* (Routledge), 1890. See Clayden, *Rogers and His Contemporaries*, 1889; Roberts, *S. Rogers and His Circle*, 1910.

[2] See above, Book IV. chap. v. sect. 2.

of those who, faithful to the old ideal, were not without experiencing the need for some novelty in literature.

His first writings were in the most banal tone of a moralising pre-Romanticism. *The Pleasures of Memory* has nothing to relieve a background of abstractions, save an insignificant elegiac music of easy and too familiar rhythm. With the progress of an audacious literature, which from a distance he was able to understand, there awakened in him a more forceful energy of feeling and expression.

His *Italy* is an interesting work. The lifeless part is that which follows, either the merely passive tradition of a scholarly pseudo-classicism, or the example of Byron. The influence of *Childe Harold* is to be felt throughout this whole series of episodes, stories and local impressions. But Rogers's inspiration is not far removed, at bottom, from that of the didactic writers of the eighteenth century; in vain does he seek to impart, like Byron, a sublime touch to his reflections on history or on life. When he does no violence to his temperament, he has the gift of seeing and catching the character of places and people, of portraying the picturesqueness of Italy, present or past; and in order to inlay and set off these precise suggestions, his art can display a sure, piquant and felicitous touch. His vignettes, even at the present day, are strikingly true. Not only has he provided the model of a kind of tourist's guide in verse; but he has interpreted in a form accessible to all, in blank verse, which is not without force, something of the pathos and splendour with which Romanticism had enriched moral meditation and landscape painting. The work of this belated writer awakened in the conservative part of the public the sense of certain keener notes of expression, which his careful technique harmonised with traditional effects.

Still more famous than Rogers during his lifetime, Moore[1]

[1] Thomas Moore, born in Dublin, in 1779, won the esteem of scholars by the translation in verse of Anacreon (1800), his *Poems of the Late Thomas Little* (1801), *Epistles, Odes and Other Poems* (1806), then that of the general public by his *Irish Melodies* (1807-34), *Lalla Rookh* (1817), *The Loves of the Angels* (1823). On the other hand, a series of political satires (*The Twopenny Post-Bag*, 1813; *The Fudge Family in Paris*, 1818; *Tom Crib's Memorial to Congress*, 1819, *Fables for the Holy Alliance*, 1823, etc.), served very successfully the cause of the Whig party. In prose, he wrote among other works a novel (*The Epicurean*, 1827); *A Life of Sheridan*, 1825; the friend of Byron, he destroyed the manuscripts of the latter's memoirs, and gave an apologetic colouring to his biography (*The Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, 1830). He also edited Byron's works (1832-5),

is less neglected to-day; certain of his shorter poems continue to appear in anthologies. But his work as a whole has completely lost a popularity which equalled that of Byron and Scott. The reasons for such a fate are patent enough, although one may venture to suggest that it is somewhat unjust. With the passing of a century, the talent of Moore has had its deficiencies shown up, but it has not lost its charm. Literary history will probably leave him one of the first ranks among the Romanticists of the second order; for his poetry, however nerveless it may be, yet possesses an element of inspired originality in its musical flow and the felicity of its language.

A wholly superficial grace clothes the light amorous verses of his youth. Until the end, Moore will remain a society poet; a conventionality with a flavour of artifice will thus always be found intermingled with his marvellous ease of touch. But in this pleasing and somewhat false form of writing, no one has ever been more sincere; the very temperament of the poet is here attuned to the discreet gallantry, the elegiac sensibility, the witty delicacy, which go to make a successful drawing-room improviser. And the gifted poet is already revealed by a sureness of rhythm, a brilliance and an aptness of phrasing, which are nothing short of extraordinary.

These qualities stand out in greater relief when they are supported by a more serious theme. The *Irish Melodies*, even when deprived of the airs to which they were to be sung, have an expressive, seductive harmony which is a very efficacious instrument of suggestion. The national value of Moore's work must not be exaggerated; the Irish mind, now more conscious and jealous of its integrity, only half recognises itself in this tempered transposition of its own essence, entirely adapted to suit both the preferences and the language of Englishmen. But it is difficult to deny that a diffuse feeling of Ireland, of her imagination and of her soul, has been infused in these verbal melodies where the music of the syllables, the nostalgy of the landscape, and the melancholy of a mourning people, are blended into such a winning harmony.

Lalla Rookh was the delight of a whole generation; and with-

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and died in 1852. *Poetical Works*, ed. by Godley, 1910; *Selected Poems*, by Falkiner, 1903. *Memoirs*, etc., ed. by Russell, 1856. See studies by Symington (1880), Vallat (Paris, 1886), Brémond, 1904; Gwynn (English Men of Letters), 1905; Baldensperger, *Moore et Vigny* (*Mod. Lang. Review*, vol. i., 1906); Thomas, *Moore en France*, 1911.

out experiencing this spell to the same degree, one can still realise it. In the making of the poem, many influences are to be found interwoven; Beckford, Southey and Byron prepared the way for this Oriental tale, although none of them actually supplied the model; the apportionment of the ingredients, the fusion of artistic luxuriance with dramatic and ironical elements, takes place according to the author's own formula. The whole is suavely romantic, somewhat over-sweet, but relieved by a sprightly vivacity and the intensity of a coloured vision. By combining tenderness with a veiled ardour, humour with the soberly sensual grace of Eastern imagery, Moore complies with the needs and curiosity of English taste, without exceeding the measure enforced by a clearly felt desire for idealisation. In no other work does the talent of the writer more clearly show its affinity with properly feminine æsthetics. This vast fairy tale, of thin substance, but overflowing with inexhaustible lyricism, displays an art already Victorian, which would seem in some respects to announce the touch of Tennyson. The magic of the style, and the easy, varied happiness of an astonishing prosodic virtuosity, would make it a kind of masterpiece, were it not for a certain lavishness which overburdens the delicacy of its arabesques, and for the too fragile structure of this palace of the "Arabian Nights."

Lalla Rookh is accompanied by a prose commentary, in which the verve of Moore disports itself in numberless allusions to his time; indeed with him mockery is never very far removed from the most gorgeous plays of imagination. The charm of his nature is due in great part to this Irish versatility, which delights in the close interplay of slyness and sentiment. He is one of the masters of political satire. After some unhappy attempts in the solemn style of the eighteenth century, he found his true vein, in a familiar manner free from all vulgarity. *The Fudge Family in Paris*, for instance, is irresistibly funny; and the comic inventiveness which unfolds itself in these poems of free movement, of a form and measure pleasantly popular, at the expense both of national prejudices and of the ponderous dogmatism on which was founded the imperious order of the "Holy Alliance," often attains a high artistic worth through its accuracy of observation as through the precise neatness of the form.

There are yet other sides to Moore's talent; as the editor

and biographer of Byron he is still entitled to recognition; but it is in his capacity of elegiac poet, and creator of liquid sonorities, the evocator of an East at once pagan and Christian, that the poet has left the deepest mark upon his time. *The Loves of the Angels* could well give delight to an age when a new spirit of moral audacity was beginning to take an eager interest in obscure religious myths and fallen angels. Here, also, the poet's talent remains striking, and was even more so with his contemporaries. Lamartine and Vigny, in particular, among the French Romanticists, bear witness to the influence exercised by Moore.

Apart from Rogers and Moore, this period is rich in poets who are of a clearly inferior order, but are saved from oblivion through some individual accent, some occasional flash of personality; as for example the peasant poet, John Clare,[1] in whom a remarkably spontaneous feeling for nature creates for itself a form that is unfortunately less fresh; Mrs. Hemans,[2] whose success testifies to the very strong fascination which healthy and simple emotions still exerted over the general public in a Romantic age; Charles Jeremiah Wells[3] and George Darley,[4] who like many of their contemporaries illustrate the magnetic attraction which the dramatic models, the imagination and the style of Elizabethan literature possessed in those days; lastly, William Combe,[5] James and Horace Smith,[6] who reveal, in their successful parodies of the first Romanticists, the persistence of irony, and the need for rational moderation, which the exhaustion of sensibility will soon call upon to take their revenge.

2. *Essayists and Critics: Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, De Quincey,*—Charles Lamb[7] is wholly bound up with the inner

[1] 1793-1864; *Poems*, etc., 1820; *The Village Minstrel*, 1821. *Poems by Clare*, ed. by Symons, 1908; *Poems*, selected and edited by Blunden, etc., 1920.

[2] 1793-1835; *The Domestic Affections*, 1812; *The Forest Sanctuary*, 1826.

[3] 1800-1879; *Joseph and His Brethren*, 1824; new edn. revised, 1876.

[4] 1795-1846; *Errors of Ecstasie*, 1822; *Sylvia*, 1827; *Nepenthe*, 1835. See Book VI. chap. iv. sect. 3.

[5] 1741-1823; *Three Tours of Dr. Syntax*, 1812-21.

[6] *Rejected Addresses*, 1812.

[7] Charles Lamb, born in London, in 1775, of lower middle-class family, studied at Christ's Hospital, where he knew Coleridge; entering the service of the South Sea, then of the East India Company, he led the quiet life of a clerk, which, however, had one great crisis: in a fit of madness his sister Mary killed their mother (1796); Lamb sacrificed himself for many years and with tender care managed to save the mental condition of his unfortunate sister. His literary friendships, his reading, his keen liking for old-time writers, filled his life. His short poems appeared with those of Coleridge and Charles Lloyd (1797-8; see above, Book V.

history of the first generation of Romanticism; a judicious friend, an enthusiast in literature, he encourages and guides the efforts of the Lake poets; he himself is a poet, with a note of moving simplicity and tender effusion which relates him to Wordsworth. His life of retirement is not without its tragic shocks, its long and cruel periods of anxiety; he fights to save his sister from madness, and himself comes dangerously near the threshold of insanity, actually overstepping it on at least one occasion. His natural tastes make him dwell in the realms of imagination and dreams, while his artistic soul belongs to the past. A highly sensitive disposition lays him open to all the tremors of the heart, and his work is a varied meditation on the sad mystery of time and change. His nature seemed attuned, as it were beforehand, to the most pathetic chords of the new literature, and his lot afforded him ample opportunity of being in all sincerity, and by virtue of his experience, the vehement echo of human suffering.

He was anything but that. While his genius has all the emotions, the curious and fanciful touches of Romanticism, it has neither its passion nor its fever. A silent modesty, verging on the heroic, curbs the over-effusive expression of his feelings. And a certain fine and subtle element, diffused in his thoughts, saves them from any untoward display of intensity, leading them back irresistibly to a supple sense of exact fitness. This essential element is humour, with which no writer was ever so intimately and deeply permeated. The psychological quality of this mental attitude to life—made up of an attentive playfulness, of the expert handling of all the shades of sentiment—harmonises with a discreet and restrained tenderness; but bringing with it a lucid consciousness, a self-possession, a sense of relative values, together with an accurate power of observation, it transforms the

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chap. i. sect. 5); he published *A Tale of Rosamund Gray*, 1798; a tragedy, *John W*[illegible] 1807. His *Tales from Shakespeare* ([illegible] have become a children's classic. T[illegible] *ets, Who Lived About the Time o*[illegible] critical articles, etc., to different reviews; from 1820 onwards there appeared in the *London Magazine* the series of essays signed "Elia," collected in a volume (1st Series, 1823; 2nd, 1833). Lamb died in 1834. *Works*, ed. by Ainger, 1900; *Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by Lucas, 1905; ed. by Hutchinson, 1908; *Essays of Elia*, ed. by Thompson, 1913-14; *Miscellaneous Essays*, idem, 1921. See life of Lamb by Ainger (English *Men of Letters*), 1882; Lucas, 1905; new edn., 1921. Studies by W. Pater (*Appreciations*), 1889; Woodberry, 1900; Derocquigny (*Ch. L., sa vie et son œuvre*), 1904.

Romanticism of Lamb by enriching it. This Romanticism is thus divested of the exclusive ardour of imagination and heart, without which it cannot be said to exist in its pure state. Lamb's humour represents an original revenge of personality over circumstance, through which, in a Romantic age, a mind which still belongs to its time transcends it, and joins up with other times. His art exhausts and reconciles the aromas of very different flowerings in literature; and along with that of the Renascence, we feel in it the persisting flavour of classicism.

Nothing is more truly individual than this delightful and at the same time scholarly fusion. Lamb's personality is unique. The essay, a form which provides him with his favourite mode of expression, becomes in his hands the artificial but precious instrument of a constant self-revelation. The fictitious figure of Elia is the main but not the only centre, of that secret magnetism which organises the reflections, the memories of books and things, the diversity of opinions and characters, the comedy and drama of each day, around one theme, namely, the particular reaction of a soul to life. Without openly taking himself as a subject, without touching upon any aspect of his own experience but to transform it, Lamb is for ever speaking of himself. It is not a case of vanity, but simply that he relates what he knows best. The past like the present of his self offers him a fund of inexhaustible matter, which he freely exploits; one part of his being dominates and judges the other. The subjectivism of his method bears no resemblance to that of the great fanatical egoists; one discerns in it the shrewd detachment of a critical mind, aware of the illusion implied in all personal preoccupation, and infusing a spirit of irony even into the inevitable self-pity that always accompanies the contemplation of one's past.

The impersonal and moralising type of essay which Johnson had bequeathed to literature thus returns, beyond the sober and mixed formula of the *Spectator*, to the example of Montaigne. But Lamb is not a moralist nor a psychologist; his object is not research, analysis or confession; he is, above all, an artist. He has no aim save the reader's pleasure, and his own. If we find contact with his work to be both refining and elevating, it is through an influence which hides itself, and acts indirectly. On the contrary, everything is adjusted with a view to our intellectual delectation; emotion itself is a means, a touch which

enhances and diversifies the picture. Never were such intentions more complex in their range, more delightful in their combined working.

Each essay is a little wonder in which fancy and wit embroider the most unexpected variations upon a background of reflection and anecdote. Humour here is diffused everywhere; it is like an atmosphere which heightens and multiplies the particular effect of each device. Lamb is amusing, paradoxical, ingenious, touching, poetic, eloquent; and the impression keeps with us that he is all these in turn, without ever being but these and nothing else; that a detached and versatile consciousness allows him to gauge each attitude, its scope and limits; and thus procures for us in each case not only the satisfaction of enjoying a mood, but also that of seeing around and beyond it. The solemn seriousness with which comic elements are worked out and thus set off is but one of the forms, the most easily understood, of this essential duality of mind. The purpose of sly insincerity and, in a fashion, of trickery which is most often that of the writer, is reflected in numberless ways through his style. The ordering, the discontinuity or logic in the development, the tone, the choice of words, constitute as many notes in this infinitely varied scale of expressions, which ranges from the pun to the loftiest eloquence or suggestion, and which shows the writer's supreme art in his self-control, in his power almost always to stop in time. Lamb can be simple at will; and his most novel effects remain free from laboriousness or affectation. Still more astonishing than the fertility of his verve is his sureness of taste.

The reason is that he possesses the most delicately practised critical judgment. The finesse of his literary perception comes from a culture, both ancient and modern, less erudite than it is deep and permeating, which reaches the innermost fibres of his mental being. There is a measure of originality even in this humanism; it is coloured by strong preferences and avowed partialities. In his appreciation of literary works, Lamb remains a man; his whole personality becomes involved, and his moods play by no means the least important part. There is supreme sharpness in these impressions; they adopt most often the scale of accepted values; but they also deviate from it in order to correct it by the boldness of a novel insight, or enrich it with

paradoxical shades in which his temperament gracefully disports itself.

These reactions, as a whole, constitute a doctrine. Lamb takes sides; he is a vigorous supporter of Romanticism, inasmuch as his passionate admiration returns, beyond the classical school, to the old-time authors of the Renascence and the seventeenth century. He is full of a love, fed on familiar acquaintance, not only for the Elizabethan dramatists, but also for the masters whose archaism is a bar to enjoyment, and who are no longer read. His style is steeped in their manner; his art assimilates and recreates, through transposed means, which yet retain something of their primitive character, the delightfully learned gravity of Sir Thomas Browne, the naïvety of Izaak Walton. The tales in which he and his sister have simplified the dramas of Shakespeare remain a favourite reading with children; the *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* stimulated the sympathetic interest which was beginning to be felt in Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, Massinger and Chapman; he retrieved from oblivion the names of some authors, such as Wither. Lamb's action in the field of criticism was diffuse and truly fruitful; he contributed more than any other in reviving the claims of writers who are perhaps the most truly national England can show, and in combining this distant influence with the living and present spirit of literature.

His letters are charming; much more spontaneous than his essays, and of a quality both of thought and of verve which is equivalent, if not equal, they reveal the bond existing between his entire work and his deeper personality, as well as the natural truth of the vein from which his writings have sprung.

In a perspective which shows it between Lamb and Hazlitt, the figure of Leigh Hunt[1] would appear at the first glance to

[1] James Henry Leigh Hunt, born near London in 1784, the son of a clergyman, studied at Christ's Hospital, wrote at an early age verses, critical essays, and founded with his brother John a review, the *Examiner*, in which he upheld Radical ideas; was imprisoned for two years (1813-15) for attacking the Regent. He published poems (*The Feast of the Poets*, 1814; *The Story of Rimini*, 1816; *Foliage*, 1818), edited the *Indicator* (1819-21), sojourned in Italy (1822-25), where he launched with the help of Byron a periodical, the *Liberal*, which proved a failure. Of careless habits, he led an unsettled life until his death in 1859; an assiduous writer, at once journalist (in the *Companion*, the *Tatler*, *Leigh Hunt's London Journal*, the *Edinburgh Review*, etc.); poet (*Captain Sword and Captain Pen*, 1835; *The Palfrey*, 1842, etc.); critic (editions of Wycherley, Congreve, etc., and Sheridan, with introductions, 1840; collections of selected texts: *Imagination and Fancy*, 1844; *Wit and Humour*, 1846); novelist (*Sir Ralph Eshar*, 1832); and

lack relief. Numerous traits go to compose it, none of which has a master's decisive strength. But when more closely examined, it becomes attractive, and assumes its true character, which is average and representative. This so-called Radical has moderate instincts, this doctrinarian is a generous idealist, whose principles are nearly all reducible to sentiments. The political, social and religious ideas of Hunt express the needs of a sincere heart; he is eager to restore in society and in men's souls the order which he seems to threaten; what he does is to justify it, purify and establish it on the more solid foundation of spiritual values. What there is of a diffuse humanitarianism and of a moral faith in the modern English mind, we find symbolised to a very large extent by this writer who, as the son of a cleric, became an impassioned advocate of democracy and free religion, and who, in certain respects, adumbrates the social spirit of Dickens and Kingsley. Far from being a revolutionary, or a man of exceptional temperament, he takes his place in the central line of the durable instincts of a people.

His Romanticism is rather superficial. In his youth he experiences a period of unrest and morbid disquietude; but he very quickly recovers, regaining with the assurance of moral health the sense of balance. He loves the green English countryside, and describes with intensity of feeling the beauty of its fields; he has a keen perception for the concrete aspects of existence, and can recreate them through his imagination. This sure and joyous hold upon reality translates itself into an exuberance which scandalises the public, and provokes a charge of animality and paganism. But Hunt remains a Christian; and if any trace of commonness can be found in him, he is free from the slightest indelicacy. Without being a daring innovator, he opens up new paths. Through his fund of fresh sensibility, his salutary independence towards the forms which time has consecrated, and his intimate knowledge of Chaucer and Spenser, he

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dramatist (*The Legend of Florence*, 1840). He left an *Autobiography*, 1850 (ed. by Ingpen, 1903); and a confession (*The Religion of the Heart*, 1853). His complete works have not yet appeared in a collected edition; *Poetical Works*, ed. by Th. Hunt, 1840; edn. Milford, 1922. *Selected Essays and Poems*, ed by Johnson, 1891; *Essays*, ed. by Symons, 1903; *Dramatic Essays*, ed. by Archer and Lowe, 1894. Biography by Monkhouse (Great Writers), 1893; studies by Saintsbury (*Essays in English Literature*), 1890; R. B. Johnson, 1896; Miller (*L. Hunt's Relations with Byron, Shelley and Keats*), 1910; L. P. Pickering (*Lord Byron, Leigh Hunt, and the "Liberal"*), 1925.

is able to renovate the technique of the rhymed line of five beats; he does away with the rigid mould in which the heroic couplet has been imprisoned, giving it back ease and suppleness, a liberty in the inner breaks suggestive either of trivial familiarity, or of dramatic and lyrical liveliness. But *The Story of Rimini* is not without its faults, and they are just those whose influence can be traced most perceptibly in Keats. The best of Hunt's poetry is to be found in the rhythmic prose which he wrote at times, and which is of a richly evocative quality. Certain of his pages have the cadenced harmony, the brilliance and the impressionist eloquence which De Quincey was about to develop to a high degree of artistic perfection.

In other directions, again, others after him went still further. He freed the essay from a too strait-laced tradition, brought it closer to the realm of journalism, and made it an instrument of unlimited resources. But the effects he drew from it are not of the first order. In his writings of this nature, which were abundant, varied and a trifle diffuse, the estimable merits of the style, verve and humour suffer from inevitable and crushing comparisons. He inaugurated theatrical criticism, only to be surpassed in this field by Hazlitt. Frequently at least do we come upon pages of greater force, which arrest our attention, reveal a man in the writer, as well as throw light upon his times. The critic in Hunt possesses intuition and correct taste; he also loves the old authors, and sets the example of a sensibility naturally adapted to the expressions of the national genius which classicism tried to disown. But he has not these gifts in a supreme degree. The book which has most chance of preserving the name of Hunt is in all probability his *Autobiography*, a work full of charm which relates an interesting career, all bound up with the history of a generation of great writers.

Hazlitt[1] embodies all that is personal; his is a lonely spirit,

[1] William Hazlitt, born in 1778, the son of a Unitarian minister, renounced an ecclesiastical career, took up painting and studied in Paris; but, attracted by intellectual problems, he published treatises on moral philosophy or politics (*Essay on the Principles of Human Action*, 1805; *Free Thoughts on Public Affairs*, 1806; *A Reply to the Essay on Population by the Rev. Malthus*, 1807, etc.); then devoting his whole attention to journalism and literature, he collaborated in the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Examiner*, etc.; published several collections of essays (*The Round Table*, 1817; *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, 1817; *A View of the English Stage*, 1818; *Political Essays*, 1819); gathered in volume form his critical lectures: *Lectures on the English Poets*, 1818; *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, 1819; *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*,

in open or secret conflict with the world, in which his unflinching sincerity, his sharp, examining eye, disturb all the values set up by convention and compromise. There is a touch of Rousseau in him, an element of suffering pride, a certain misanthropy; but he does not lose his self-control, his sense of balance, even if he lacks the easy unity of a simple soul. For his nature is twofold, and this duality constitutes its richness, as in some measure it does its uneasiness. His outlook is essentially critical, and bears the stamp of religious dissent; it has been formed at the time of the French Revolution, and under the influence of a philosophy of progress through reason. Hazlitt is in certain respects the ally of those intellectual Radicals who, after 1815, revive the cause of vanquished liberty. He believes in the virtue of doctrines, and is ready to stand by the consequences of his principles until the end. But at the same time, his mind is deeply impregnated with Romanticism. He knows and experiences the fecund powers of intuitive knowledge, the limits of logical intelligence. A strong and direct sense of the inner life, a penetrating sympathy which lays bare to his gaze the secrets of other souls, such are the gifts from which Hazlitt's work derives its originality. They imply a consciousness of self that is intensified by a more vivid faculty of imagination and feeling; and belong indeed to the age of Coleridge and Wordsworth.

He should be ranked with the critics of life. As such, he shows insight, and virility rather than bitterness; no one was more alive than Hazlitt to the joys of independence, of art, and of the truth which is freely sought and tasted; the courage of a proud soul is the diffused lesson which emanates from his writings; without illusion, he draws from human things, and more from Nature in her untouched beauty, a solace which goes to nurture his energy, and strengthens him in his resolutions of unwavering patience. His political ideas, and a certain tone of intellectuality,

1820. Mention may also be made of the following among his very abundant miscellaneous writings: *Table Talk*, 1821-2; *Characteristics*, 1823; *Liber Amoris*, 1823; *The Spirit of the Age*, 1825; *The Plain Speaker*, 1826; *Life of Napoleon Buonaparte*, 1828-30. After his death (1830) appeared *Literary Remains* (1836) etc. *Works*, ed. [illegible] *Dramatic Essays*, ed. by Archer and Lowe, 1895. *Es*[illegible] d. by Sampson, 1917; *Liber Amoris*, ed [illegible] *ritings of W. Hazlitt*, 1925. See biogr[illegible] glish Men of Letters), 1902; Douady [illegible] *Life of W. H.*, 1922; studies by Saint[illegible] *History of Criticism*,

link up the man in him with a rationalism which is persistent, or which tends to reappear. His *Liber Amoris* takes its place among the books which sought to cure Romanticism by giving expression to it. It is the study of a sentimental illusion, and of the weakness of judgment which this entails. It is, no less, the study of a "case" of feminine duplicity, of an atrophy of feeling, in a spirit of cruel realism which heralds Thackeray. But although this short novel is enacted in an atmosphere of sober irony, it nevertheless is fraught with the fever of painful passion; and here, as elsewhere, the moralist in Hazlitt works less by way of analysis than by flashes of perception, whether from partial gleams a blinding certitude be gradually evolved, or light burst forth all at once. Each perspective that he opens up on existence is thickly strewn with these sudden revelations, which turn inside out the artificial setting of our lives, upset the order of appearances, and disclose the truth which none desires or is able to see. Hazlitt's moral code is that of frankness; and this with him is the outcome of an unerring, bold, quick faculty of penetrating the spiritual depth of experience.

He is indebted to the same faculty for his rare virtue as a literary critic. Each of his portraits is a divination; with one quick movement he places himself at the centre of a personality, and recreates it through a sympathy which closely grasps the contours of its characteristics. This plastic comprehension of a human being partakes somewhat of dramatic invention, and indeed resembles it. It is guided by the whole substance of a work, of a moral and physical individuality, of a temperament; and the keen impression of Hazlitt, nurtured by the study of moods, is rather similar to the method of Sainte-Beuve; less supple and minute, less enveloping, it has often more of an untamed vigour. So frequently is his attention focussed upon the hidden side of souls, that one feels it is governed by a constant intuition of the subconscious; and his methods of investigation, with the emphasis they lay upon the semi-deceptions of the mind by itself, and the involuntary revenge of sinful nature, examples of which are to be seen at all moments in literature and society, are practically equivalent to the psycho-analytical studies of the present day.

Hazlitt is not infallible. He errs through his preconceptions, or through some mental incompatibility; he is not open to all

kinds of mental characteristics with the same broad-mindedness, nor is he free from prejudice. Among all writers, he has not done justice to Shelley. But, if his work is judged as a whole, he has a breadth of outlook, a catholicity of taste which are remarkable. He has spoken in a better way than anyone before him of many a Shakespearean figure; he is familiar with the Renascence, and in close sympathy with it; while, on the other hand, he loves and understands the comedy-writers of the Restoration; and further, he allots to Pope and his school a place among the active influences of the past. Indeed he is not bound to any set programme or to a party. His interpretations of the writers of his time are striking in their finesse and felicity of perception. He it was who traced the first roads, marked out the vantage points, and gauged the heights on the virgin soil of Romanticism; and almost in every case, his literary judgment remains that of to-day; he anticipates the future, and sees with the eyes of posterity.

The somewhat discursive manner of his writings is a strong point with him, as well as a weakness. His style is forcible and spontaneous; it progresses by means of successive traits which issue from one and the same central act of perception, subjected to the continuous light of consciousness, and examined in turn under all its aspects. Such a device ensures movement, sincerity and a telling force of style. But this discontinuity in an order which is wholly organic is not entirely happy. It gives no safety against repetition and prolixity; at times it wearies the mind that cannot readily perceive the logical sequence of thought, the point of departure or the goal. At bottom extremely English and national, Hazlitt's critical method finds in the insufficiency of composition the fault of its quality.

By the tolerance of his tastes, Hazlitt already rose above the plane of combative literature; he heralded the passing over to a synthetic age, in which Romanticism, accepted and assimilated, took its place among the legitimate expressions of British genius. This transitional character is still more clearly marked in De Quincey.[1] Here, the critical phase really succeeds the

[1] Thomas De Quincey, born in Manchester in 1785, son of a merchant, traced his descent from a noble Anglo-Norman family, but without very certain foundation; in 1802 he fled from school, wandering about for several months, and leading a lonely life in London; returning to a normal mode of living, he spent some time at Oxford, then attached himself to the Lake poets and lived near them. In 1804

creative; and this criticism, animated as it is itself by the new spirit, turns round upon it in order to judge it with a secret malice.

This is not to say that in De Quincey Romanticism does not remain deeply rooted in the very fibres of temperament. His childhood, his youth, are crossed and recrossed by adventurous episodes which betray a moral originality, almost bordering on an unsettled state of mind. But on the other hand, the intellectual side of his nature has the gift, the need of clarity; if he lives his Romanticism, he looks at himself in the process of living it, and with a critical analysis passes judgment upon it. Above all, De Quincey lacks that fruitful vigour, and that simple energy, which help to carry on around him the work of the great creators.

His literary personality organises itself round this trait. It is the case of a repressed Romanticism, whether by reason of a psychological duality, and critical lucidity, or because of a powerfulness to create, in which the nervous restlessness which was the effect as well as the cause of the craving for opium may have counted for something. This repression was all the more conscious, as he was closely acquainted with the greatest poets of his time, measured his talent by theirs, and in his contact with them gained an exact cognisance of his weakness, as of the gift of penetration which gave him back a superiority of a kind. Curbed as it was, his need for expression and compensation sought an outlet by indirect channels. The *Confessions of an Opium Eater* show in a poetical prose the transposition of an incomplete lyricism; the *Reminiscences of the English Lake Poets* reveal in this devout disciple the malice of a detached clear-sightedness.

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he fell a victim to opium, and became increasingly addicted to the drug, only partially throwing off the habit towards 1848. Mingled with the literary society of Edinburgh, he collaborated in Scottish and London reviews. In 1821 there began to appear his *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (revised in 1856). He published a novel, *Klosterheim*, 1832; *The Logic of Political Economy*, 1844; but devoted himself mainly, until his death in 1859, to essay-writing and occasional compositions. *Collected Writings*, ed. by Masson, 1890; *Confessions*, ed. by Masson, 1904; *Essays*, ed. by Whibley, 1904; *Literary Criticism*, ed. by Darbishire, 1909; *Diary*, ed. by H. A. Eaton, 1927. See biographies by Japp, 1890; Masson (English Men of Letters), 1881; Hogg (*De Quincey and His Friends*), 1895; studies by Saintsbury (*Essays in English Literature*), 1890; Leslie Stephen (*Hours in a Library*), 1892; A. Symons (*Studies in Prose and Verse*), 1904; Arvède Barine (*Névroses*, etc.), 1898; Dunn (*De Quincey's Relation to German Literature*), 1901; Salt (*De Quincey*), 1904; Durant (*De Quincey*, etc., *in Their Relations to the Germans:* Pub. Mod. Lang. Assoc. of America), 1907.

In the *Confessions*, De Quincey makes use of the Romantic elements of his life; he obeys the instinct of self-revelation, which literature had prompted; incapable as he is of sublimating his experience into poetry through a process of pure spiritualisation, he idealises it by clothing it in an imaginative and dramatic garb. Thus he comes to exploit the morbid vein which, since the time of Rousseau, has never ceased to run at the centre of European Romanticism, and from which only the generation of the English Lake poets had freed itself by an effort of moral sanity. Coleridge had failed in this effort; De Quincey, sharing his defeat, seeks like him forgetfulness in an artificial paradise. He is therefore in harmony with the second generation of poets, who are more entirely open to the impulses of instinct and desire. The contemporary of Byron, Shelley and Keats, he bears likewise the stamp of unrest. But while their feverish ardour spends itself in emotions and ecstasies which are yet real, and which have an object in view, Romanticism with De Quincey recoils upon itself, discovers that it is incapable of entering into contact with life, and under the influence of a nerve stimulant gives itself scope in the visions of an inner world.

Opium was his master, and paralysed his creative imagination by diverting it into the realm of dreams. He therefore drew the matter for his art from this very slavery, and recounted in an inspired tone the sins and glories of opium. Out of a rather futile prudence, he claims to instruct the reader, to put him on his guard; but no one is deceived; the complacent theme of the book is the dangerous and enchanting exaltation which a mighty poison, full of all the witchcraft of the East, can awaken in a human soul. It is this imaginative impression that De Quincey above all desires to create. In place of a simple narrative of facts, we find substituted a more or less voluntary idealisation, by means of which the artist fashions and organises a general evocation. With its repentant notes, and moments of timidity, this confession tends to be nothing other than the seductive portrayal of an intoxicating intensity of mental life, even if such rapture has despair lurking in its wake. All sense of objective truth is lost in the continually recurring fits of ecstatic dizziness; but so lucid is the mind of the self-analysing victim, that the picture he has drawn of these dreams still preserves a documentary value for the student of mental pathology.

The story as he tells it is bathed in an atmosphere of fatality and mystery, produced and maintained by an art which is fertile in resources. In order to describe the sombre destiny, to which De Quincey shows no displeasure that his soul should be a prey, he makes a bold use of the whole scale of poetic effects. His prose becomes animated, warms up, acquires a rhythmic flow, and assumes the colour as well as the sonority of the highest descriptive eloquence. Visions as strikingly brilliant as they are terrible or enigmatical, unfold themselves to the accompaniment of an incomparable verbal music, new as much as suggestive at that time, and whose only failing is a slightly too visible artifice. A writer of rare quality, and in certain respects original, De Quincey is not one of the great masters of style because the instrument he uses is not entirely in harmony with his nature, lending itself only to an imperfect literary sincerity. Here, and in other pieces of the same tone (*Ladies of Sorrow, Daughter of Lebanon,* etc.), we find traces of an affected language, which impair an otherwise genuine gift of expression

The rest of his work offers a keen interest, although the signs of a secret failing of the writer's intellectual will-power never does wholly disappear. His many-sided activity never concentrates strongly enough upon an object. His analytical bent leads De Quincey to the study of political economy; capable of following the play of ideas, and won over by the prestige of German metaphysics, he reads Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Jean Paul, and makes a name for himself among the small group of men who in England hold the key to transcendental philosophy. But he squanders this privilege in ephemeral articles, with no great profit. It is when dealing with subjects closer at hand that the critic in him is seen at his best. This intimate friend of the Lake poets provides us with a picture of them more familiar and precise than that in which others gave expression above all to their respectful admiration. The portraits he sketches testify to a keen penetration, aided by a complex community of feelings in which there enter some sympathy, a craving for truth, and also an obscure malignity; by a perception of the unconscious side of high and noble personalities, that is the more unerring, as the critic has more clearly grasped in his own self the moral failings of mankind.

Here again, he has all that goes to the making of talent, and

almost to the making of a poet; he can see and depict Nature, enliven a tale, stir up by a happy choice of words a living group of impressions; but he has neither the perfect simplicity of mind nor that of style; and the opinions expressed in his entire critical work, while very often of a shrewd or ingenious quality, do not possess that unerring and safe accuracy which betokens a forgetfulness of self, and an impassioned desire for nothing but justice.

3. *Landor and Peacock.*—Like Hazlitt, Landor[1] is a lonely spirit, of an even more retiring disposition, and less involved in the struggles of his time. The contemporary of Lamb, he traverses the whole of the Romantic period without ever merging into it, and he survives it until the middle of the following age. His long career links up the declining classicism of the eighteenth century with that in which the nineteenth was to seek a new standard of balance.

His whole intellectual nature marks him out for isolation. By his opinions, no doubt, he takes sides in political conflicts; he is in harmony with the second generation of poets, shares their idealistic sympathies with the rights of peoples and nationalities. But the independent course of his life removes his aggressive liberalism, except one active episode, from all contact with actuality. On the other hand, his is the temperament of the scrupulous and somewhat haughty artist; in no way did he seek popularity, finding pleasure in reckoning upon the tardy favour of a select few. Above all, the inspiration animating his work is restrained, controlled by the search for an intellectual, austere, and somewhat cold perfection.

It is too simple to say that Landor is a classicist. He carries Romanticism within himself, in so far as no one of developed sensibility could remain immune from so deep a movement of

[1] Walter Savage Landor, born at Warwick in 1775, of middle-class family, studied at Rugby, was sent down from Oxford for his Republican ideas (1793); inheriting independent means, he wrote *Poems* (1795); an epic, *Gebir*, 1798; *Simonidea*, 1806, etc.; a tragedy, *Count Julian*, 1812. After several adventurous episodes, he settled in Italy, where he spent the greater part of his life. He published *Imaginary Conversations*, 1824-29; *Examination of Shakespeare*, etc., 1834; *Pericles and Aspasia*, 1836; *Pentameron*, 1837; *Hellenics*, 1847; *Heroic Idylls*, 1863, and died in Florence in 1864. *Works*, ed. by Forster, 1876; ed. by [illegible]; *Selections*, ed. by Colvin, 1882, ed. by [illegible] lections by Cavenagh, 1914. See biog- [illegible] h Men of Letters), 1881; studies by [illegible] 2; Leslie Stephen (*Hours in a Library*), [illegible] *ture*, 2nd Series), 1895; Bradley (*The Early Poems of Landor*), 1914.

has a strange and arid grandeur; of Eastern inspiration, like the *Thalaba* of Southey, it gives evidence of a just instinct of the regeneration that must come by way of simple truth. But the abstract style of the eighteenth century is in it a persisting factor; and striking passages cannot redeem a radical absence of life and reality. Shorter poems, Greek idylls, and stanzas as clearly cut as old-time cameos, have more felicity of touch, a purity of contour that is often charming, a freshness of imagination and delineation. The blank verse of Landor, full of the memory of Milton, has force and an ample measure; but nowhere does his poetry offer the character of an inevitable form; while the cadence of his prose, more supple and harmonious, is more naturally adapted to the movement of his thought.

The *Imaginary Conversations* are odd works, and of a rather mongrel kind. In their substance are contained the fragmentary sketches of what might have been historical novels or dramas, but with nothing of the continuity and system which a regular art would have demanded. Their strongest interest lies in the revelation and contrasting of souls; and these psychological dialogues are fundamentally inspired by the same spirit of moral curiosity, of philosophic emotion, and of intelligent allowance for the diversity of things, which will produce the "monologues" of Browning. But the effort towards objectivity is in them less robust and sustained. Landor has not yet consciously outgrown the Romantic phase of direct self-expression. He obviously passes judgments, and takes sides; his portraits represent personal reactions, and their tone is at times intensified to the point of violence by an irony which seeks in vain to temper itself through an infusion of humour.

The quality of the mind which interprets and brings back to life these great figures of the past, from the remotest times of antiquity up to the present, and which calls up round each a setting of civilisation or of Nature, together with the force, the brilliance, the masterly skill displayed in so many scenes, episodes and landscapes, lend the collection the value of a work unequal, which yet forces admiration. The venture of so paradoxical an undertaking has to a great extent been a success. It must be added that the merit of the form makes one forget the deficiencies of this type of writing. Landor's language is chosen and rhythmic, instinct with a subtle music which is not that of verse,

and which, through the accuracy of a delicate adaptation to the feeling, suggests the impression of regularity that the structure of metre usually produces. Of varied character, this fine harmony is most often dignified, sententious and noble, just like the favourite tone of the writer; but this nobleness is compatible with all shades of emotion, moments of simple and serious familiarity, intervals of playful relaxing, and ecstatic and inspired meditations, in which Landor, more surely than De Quincey, reaches the supreme heights of English prose.

With Peacock,[1] the duality of a divided nature develops openly into an aggressive freedom as regards Romanticism. His is not only the detachment of an observer who watches the flood of impassioned literature pass before his eyes; his look betrays the amusement of an agile, critical intelligence. A man of transition as well as Landor, he is, above all, in reaction against his time; and if he announces the future, it is because he links himself up with the past. Through his turn of mind, he is akin to the line of eighteenth century rationalists. His outlook is cosmopolitan; he derides British prejudices; like *Hudibras*, he quotes Rabelais and Voltaire; while in social, moral and political matters he prides himself upon the fact that he thinks with a boldness unrestrained by any sentiment. He entertains radical opinions, which become attenuated with the passing of years, without being destroyed; his arrow-like comments, shot at the robust conservatism of British instinct, have a cruel force of penetration.

On the other hand, he loved Shelley, if he hated the Lake poets; he is merciless towards the economists and liberal doctrinaires; in spite of all, his life and work cannot be separated from the triumph of sentiment, and the chief current of this age. Through both life and work there runs a Romantic vein, which

[1] Thomas Love Peacock, born in 1785 at Weymouth, of middle-class family, was educated privately and passed the greater part of his long life in the service of the East India Company; published verse (*Rhododaphne*, 1818, etc.), novels: *Headlong Hall*, 1816; *Melincourt*, 1817; *Nightmare Abbey*, 1818; *Maid Marian*, 1822; *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, 1829; *Crotchet Castle*, 1831; *Gryll Grange*, 1861; he died in 1866, leaving dramatic works (published by Young, 1910), and a correspondence with Shelley, etc. (ed. by Garnett, 1910). *Works*, ed. by Cole, 1875; *Prose Works*, ed. by Garnett, 1891; *Poems*, ed. by Johnson, 1906; *P.'s Four Ages of Poetry; Shelley's Defence of Poetry*, etc., ed. by Brett-Smith, 1921. See biography by Van Doren, 1911; studies by Saintsbury (*Essays in English Literature*, 1890); Freeman (*Th. L. Peacock, a Critical Study*), 1911; Paul (*The Novels of P., Stray Leaves*), 1906; J. B. Priestley, *Thomas Love Peacock*, 1927.

spreads itself out at first, and then, being energetically repressed, hides itself, without ceasing to be recognisable. It is as an adversary that he most frequently handles the characteristic themes of the new literature; however, he shows, while dealing with them, all the shades of feeling that range from an ironical hostility to indulgence and even to full sympathy. His words are sometimes those of a writer who takes up the Romantic cue for the purpose of deriding it, but who is eventually caught at his own game. The short poems scattered through his prose narratives offer, in addition to the successful display of a racy, mocking verve, notes of charm and emotion which are unmistakable.

His novels are almost pure fantasies; the logic which holds sway in them is that of paradox or jesting. Certain elements are indeed borrowed from reality, and the taste which selected them has freshness and piquancy, as well as a keen sense of the typical and picturesque detail; Peacock, in his own way, manages to be a painter of manners and a psychologist. But these materials are assembled with supreme indifference to all that may be called rigorous probability or sequence of action. The plot is a mere pretext; the characters, among which are to be found many amusing figures, and several of which answer to actual and well-known personalities, are simply sketches. The body of each work consists of reflections and dialogues. Peacock desires nothing further than to reproduce conversation, directly or indirectly. He has written brilliant scenes in which the ideas, problems, fashions and fads of his time are re-animated and discussed with irresistible liveliness. The whole savours of the philosophical tale in the manner of Voltaire, and of the argument novel in that of Diderot; while certain comic devices, bordering on caricature, recall the English realists of the eighteenth century. A more fundamental resemblance is that which harmonises the intellectual aroma of this comedy with the works of Meredith's youth. And the style, scholarly and classical to excess, is loaded with an irony which draws delightful effects from a fully conscious and subtle pedanticism.

All this is not the work of a very vigorous creator, even although the mind which reveals itself is sincere and personal. The substance of these novels is at times very thin, which however does not save the form from being at times heavy. The dividing line between farce and humour is not always observed.

Sheer impertinence is too often associated with the most fine and suggestive drollery. At bottom, there is a certain inconsistency in Peacock. The unity of his nature, the permanent axis of his mind, are not very easily discernible. He has the conversationalist's brilliant gifts, and a little of his versatility. But some of his remarks have a singularly wide bearing, just as his criticism is often exceptionally scathing. *Headlong Hall* and *Crotchet Castle* are still read with keen pleasure; and *Nightmare Abbey* is a little masterpiece in mockery; the satire of Romanticism, then in its heyday, is carried out with a penetrating discernment of its inevitable weaknesses, of the psychological fallacies or the morbid excesses which sully its exalted spontaneity with a secret literary artifice. To all transcendental reveries, and to the cult of the mysterious and the terrifying, Peacock smilingly opposes sound good health. No text more clearly shows the persistence, in certain writers as in the average mass of the nation, of a lucid rational temper which reserves itself, remembers, and abides its time.

To be consulted: *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. xi. chap. xiii.; vol. xii. chaps. v. vii. viii. ix.; Derocquigny, *Ch. Lamb*, 1904; Elton, *Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830*, 1920; Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age*, 1825 (*Works*, ed. by Waller, vol. iv., 1902); Herford, *The Age of Wordsworth*, 1899; Leigh Hunt, *Autobiography*, 1850; H. M. Peacock and M. C. B. Wheeler, *Selected English Essays*, 1911; H. Crabb Robinson, *Diary*, ed. by Sadler, 1869; Salt, *De Quincey*, 1904; Stoddard, *Personal Recollections of Lamb, Hazlitt*, etc., 1903; H. Walker, *The English Essay and Essayists*, 1915; *Modern English Essays*, ed. by E. Rhys, 5 vols., 1922.

BOOK VI

THE SEARCH FOR BALANCE (1832-1875)

CHAPTER I

THE NEW PERIOD—CAUSES AND CHARACTERISTICS

From 1830 onwards it is more and more evident that a literary transition is developing. And 1832 is the year of a great reform which lays the solid foundation of political democracy, the steady progress of which will coincide with the long reign of Queen Victoria. To the decade which lies between 1830 and 1840 may be traced the beginning of a new age in English literature and society.

Romanticism indeed is not dead; but its creative force is becoming exhausted, and writers now turn in ever-increasing numbers to other sources of inspiration. For the inner movement of minds is taking them away from Romanticism, or robbing it of the fullness of its appeal to them.

The formal doctrines of the Romanticists had never been officially recognised; to the end, they had been opposed by conservative opinion, and their disputed triumph was rather a question of fact than of rights. Besides, only some men with exceptional tempers had proved able to live up to them, while the general public and the bulk of the nation had followed at a distance, or had remained indifferent or hostile. Yet a fashion, a vogue, the prestige of recent sensational works, the scandal that surrounded the name of a Byron, the reprobation called forth by that of a Shelley, no less than the lure of a new and moving beauty, forced on the general public the anxious awareness, if not the love, of a literature whose audacity soared beyond the taste of the crowd. The popular and accepted successes of a Scott or a Moore, like the growing reputation of a Wordsworth, served to add to the mass of influences which, in spite of all, were creating an atmosphere of general intensity, and gave the

impression of unrestricted daring in the quest of literary effects. Thus, the average Englishman was instinctively conscious of the fact that he was participating, either as a willing adherent or as a tolerant onlooker—and this for more than a generation—in a phase of moral life where sensibility and imagination ruled in freedom.

Therefore the strain of Romanticism, and the anxiety born of its excesses, are felt even by those who have not experienced its feverish glow. The psychological reaction which is now beginning finds a response, more or less dimly, in most minds, and may be likened in the extent of its influence to a national movement.

This reversion in the rhythmic life of the mind observes the law of alternate sequences. After the rule of emotions, dreams and the tumults of the soul, there comes a time when the need of an order born of reason begins to manifest itself. The keynote of the new era, therefore, will be a pronounced call for rationality in all things. The literary phase which is now about to begin will, in its essential character, be allied to that against which Romanticism had previously rebelled; it will be Neo-Classical in its principle; once again the desire for truth will take first place among the motives of creation; realism as one of the means of expression will be given greater latitude, and the claims of a careful style will be more often emphasised.

The moral pulse beats in agreement with the circumstances of the time. During the Victorian era, art forms part of a coherent social whole. Simultaneously and from every direction comes the call for order and discipline. The Reform Act sets at rest the political disturbances by satisfying the impatient demands of the middle classes, and seems to inaugurate an age of stability. After the crisis which followed the struggle against the French Revolution and Napoleon, England sets about organising herself with a view to internal prosperity and progress. At peace with Europe, she wishes to be at peace with herself. Rules of conduct and religious beliefs have been shaken in the storm; Romanticism has championed the claims of passion, and upheld the rights of the individual; the laxity in morals as witnessed during the regency of George IV. has equalled that of the most unbridled periods of the eighteenth century. With the advent to power of a middle class largely imbued with the spirit of Puritanism,

and the accession of a queen to the throne, English society reassumes a larger measure of self-control. Henceforth an accepted standard of stricter morality—sincere or merely conventional—is imposed by common consent; and with Carlyle lies the task of voicing the principles which preside over this national return to a sterner notion of duty.

The practical energy brought into play in the conquest of matter also obeys certain laws; here, again, it is a case of disciplined effort. New discoveries are daily added to the inventions which have given rise to modern machinery; the application of steam in sea and land transport, the improvements in tools, the mobility of capital, the tremendous strides in production and trade which are making Great Britain, during the middle years of the century, the wealthiest of the powers and the very type of an industrial and commercial nation, all confirm and still further intensify one central impulse: the English mind is thus led to reasoned-out habits, positive attention, and cautious methods in action and in thought. And so the basic principle of a teeming economic activity favours in literature the return to precision in form, to beauty within the limits of reason, and to values which have received the stamp of universal approval.

This close connection between material expansion on the one hand, and a phase of realism and order on the other, finds definite expression in a privileged sphere of activity, which is, as it were, a common centre whence radiates at once the power of mind over matter, and the mental energy whereby mind can control itself. Since the sixteenth century science has been a growing, rival force beside religion and the arts; during the eighteenth, it ceased to be the privilege of an élite, and awakened an interest in the mind of every cultured person; about the middle of the nineteenth century, it comes to hold a place of primal importance among the intellectual preoccupations of the average man. It proves its worth by the control it exercises over the physical universe, and also by the idea of unity which it offers or promises to the innumerable seekers in the many branches of knowledge. It gives power, and also the satisfaction of logical thinking; it holds supreme sway during this new age. It helps the progress of production, and is furthered by it in return. It accentuates the positive character of the century; but it is as much an effect as a cause, and owes its success in no small way to the fostering

influence of positive ideas, during this phase when reason is paramount. The goal it sets itself is the search after truth; its formulæ are linked together in a carefully balanced system. And so science provides the very type of a mentality that is essentially counter-Romantic, at the same time as it precisely defines the psychological tone of the period.

From 1830 onwards, the parallel and simultaneous development of all the sciences of mind and matter proceeds with the rapid, imperious, irresistible trend of great historical changes. A vast combination of forces is felt to be at play; and such a combination as will, of necessity, transform life, modify the condition of man, and definitively establish his place in nature. From the very beginning there is evidence of the ambitious quest for an all-embracing synthesis, a supreme theory, a central point towards which the highest attainable results in each science would increasingly tend to converge. And when Spencer, continuing the biological hypotheses of Darwin, organises knowledge in its entirety into a philosophy of evolution, the whole scientific movement seems to reach its inevitable conclusion.

English literature, therefore, in the years which follow 1830, will be deeply moulded by the authority of a reason which has grown more exacting and active, and which finds its direct and main outlet in science. But it must not be understood that this character alone defines the literature of the period. Far from it. The prestige of knowledge, as of its ally industrialism, may seem more and more to be taking hold upon society; but social life is still very far from becoming a willing victim to the severe dictates of the scholars of Reason. In fact, the Victorian age does not bring science, in the full sense of the word, into the actual life of every day, and cannot, because the great majority of the nation are not interested in anything beyond empiricism, whether of the lowest or of the most refined kind. Compromise stamps this type of civilisation; and monetary gain rather than the love of truth is the magnetic force which spurs on its activity. It bears within itself the hope of progress through self-controlling thought; but with the masses this hope is only perceived, or understood, as a desire for enjoyment or money-making, which, in order to be satisfied, turns to the popularised elements of knowledge.

And what is of greater importance, the psychological tone of the period is by no means pure; in fact, it is less so now than

ever before. Till the fated days when an ancient literature reaches its dying phase, *the principle of the preservation of the* past in the present acquires a broader and ever broader influence, a more and more powerful sway. And this principle is truer as the moral organism of a people approaches maturity, as the nation in the fullness of its development becomes conscious of its identity, and begins to appreciate the value of its past. Now the Victorian age would seem to correspond to the decisive, perfected ripeness of the original English genius; to the phase when this originality, in full possession of itself, and having more than once gone through the whole cycle of its rhythmic course, has through experience realised all its powers, and gathers in its depths the cherished possession of them all. During the middle and in the final years of the nineteenth century the English mind knows deeper and fuller vibrations than at any other moment in the history of its growth; one feels in it at once the refreshed and still living remembrance of its Elizabethan youth, the lucid self-mastery which it owes to the long schooling of classicism, and the renewed vigour of the Romantic revival. All these influences and these memories combine in the thought and the art of a literary age which, when the ephemeral injustice of reaction has spent itself, will probably come to be looked upon as the most powerful and the greatest among all the periods of English culture.

On the other hand, while the quality of the national soul becomes richer and more diversified, its quantity, if one may so say, tends to increase accordingly. The Victorian age is the first in which the lower middle classes, and the greater part of the general public, have really had access to culture. With the realisation of democratic ideas, education is now more widely distributed. Cheap editions find an unlimited public for the works of the best among past and present writers, and the reviews serve in the most useful way for the diffusion of literature. A feature of this age is the fortune of the serial novel, while another is the creation of the modern newspaper, at once the organ of information and of popular education. The mass of the nation, even to the lowest of its classes, is being born to the life of the mind. Never before have writers of comparatively humble birth been so relatively, or so absolutely, numerous. The effect of this increase is felt not only in the number of the unities,

or cells, which go to compose the moral organism of the nation, but also in the many-sided nature of the elements thus grouped together in a composite whole. For the classes which gain access to culture represent, as it were, in the history of national thought, a continual rejuvenation; to a certain extent, although somewhat obscurely, they have shared in the progress of society, but their faculties are more alive and more intact; they contribute to strengthen the elemental forces of the national life, and tend to bring literature back to its origin. With this evocation of the past it is, one may say, largely the past itself, in its newest and most living form, which thus becomes incorporated in the present. And not only have we thus an ever-increasing proportion of minds who bring with them the gift of an almost fresh sensibility to literature; but also, in accordance with a very simple law of experience, as the social foundation of the literary art is being broadened, we witness at the same time an increase in the number and diversity of the dissentient temperaments—those which, whether erratic, belated or prophetic, are pitched in another key than that of their epoch.

Lastly, in so far as Romanticism had expressed a restless state of the deeper life of the soul, and in so far as its decline answered the establishment of Victorian balance, this decline could be neither complete nor sudden, because the unrest in the social world did not disappear with the advent of an order which aimed at greater stability, and, in fact, achieved it. Scarcely have political disturbances been allayed, when there is a fresh and serious outbreak in the economic world; the Victorian period, quiet as it is, throbs with the feverish tremors of anxiety and trouble; this agitation, never quite appeased, can momentarily subside, or break out again so strongly that the whole order of the nation is threatened with an upheaval. From 1840 to 1850 in particular, England seems to be on the verge of a revolution; the novel with a purpose, and a whole series of kindred publications, reflect this disturbed spirit, which is not without an influence on the whole of literature; and a special form of Romanticism, fed by the emotional unrest in the social sphere, derives a renewed vitality from these sources.

To the combined effect of all these causes is due the survival and prolongation of Romanticism, which can be likened, not so much to the twilight glimmer of a closing day, as to a warm

glow of sustained light whose radiance is felt to spread in every direction. The spirit of Romanticism continues to influence the innermost consciousness of the age which sees a Tennyson, a Thackeray, a Browning and an Arnold; it permeates almost every thought, just as it colours almost every mode of expression. Even its adversaries, and those who would escape its spell, are impregnated with it. To combat its spell, use is made of the very arms which it itself employs; Carlyle, in denouncing it, does so in a style which is intense, charged with emotional fire and visionary colouring. So deep is the penetrating power of this secret inoculation, that English literature after 1850 does not ring, when tested, with a sound very different from that of the years preceding 1830. New vibrations have been added to the main chord; the tone has been changed; the value of the suggestion is no longer the same; but there is scarcely any alteration in one essential component factor, and this is the element which may be termed "Romantic." It continues to reveal itself with such persistence that when, at the most recent turning-point in literary history—the years from 1875 to 1880, and the beginning of contemporary literature—we find the Romantic inspiration again in the ascendant, the new literary transition is much less clearly marked than in the majority of previous cases. In one sense, and despite the superficial variations in taste, England, like Europe, is not as yet entirely free from the predominant influence of Romanticism; she is still witnessing the development of its effects, whether direct or indirect. For it is no easy matter to remedy such a disease, which intensifies the powers of the soul, and imparts a morbid taste even to the desire for recovery; it is not easy to cure that accentuated form of an ancient sensibility which has come to be an integral part of the permanent fund of human experience.

And not only does Romanticism continue to live, but the old trunk retains enough vigour to send forth young and promising shoots. The very exercise of reason and the pursuit of scientific studies, together with all the psychological causes which are about to promote a second classicism, stir up a desire for compensation, and awaken an instinctive longing for moral balance. A victorious re-assertion of imagination and the heart thus can be said to proceed directly from the triumph of positivism and industrialism. The age that sees the new doctrines of rationality

in operation is also to witness the birth of a new idealism, which will essay to cope with the perils of a morally impoverished life, without waiting for the inevitable reaction that the future holds in store.

Eighteenth-century England had believed that the struggle waged between religion on the one hand, and independent thought on the other, had been concluded to the advantage of the former; to all appearances deism had been vanquished. But now its more dangerous heir, the philosophy of the Utilitarians, is invading more aggressively the whole field of morality and belief. At the same time, from the sphere of industry, where everything is based on fact, there emanates a mood of indifference towards anything that relates to the supernatural. Lastly, the science of nature, and that of human origins, now bring unexpected assistance to the spirit of free intellectual inquiry. The moral effect of modern geological hypotheses, and of German exegesis, is felt in England long before Darwinism has come forth; and from 1830 to 1875 repeated shocks are shaking the fabric of traditional beliefs.

The consciousness of the average man is dimly aware of the conflict in progress, and intuitively comes to recognise that there is a danger threatening the fundamental reasons to live. The echo of this alarm is heard through the whole of Victorian literature. And as the historian and the naturalist appear to be the enemies of biblical teaching, all the representatives of the growing civilisation of the day—economists, masters of industry, business men—are deemed the artisans of a hopeless and a joyless materialism. The breaking-up of beliefs, the loss of cherished illusions, the end of all nobility and beauty, such are the various aspects of one and the same disaster, the fear of which is diversely obsessing the minds of those to whom feeling and imagination are essentials of life itself. They are sufficiently numerous, and their spiritual energy is active enough, to create powerful counter-movements in the religious, social and æsthetic worlds, against the withering atmosphere of the order that is forcing itself upon them. This crisis in the life of many souls is intimately allied with the uneasy feeling, roused by the unchecked development of an individualistic society. The destructive action of science, and of a material revolution, thus produces its inevitable effects as early as the middle years of

the century; this rationalist age is all shaken by the echoing sounds of one impassioned protestation after another. Newman, Carlyle and Ruskin, in conflict with the spirit of their time, introduce all the themes which fifty years later a new mysticism, then triumphant, will take up in the glad feeling of its own harmony with a deep stirring of thought, and with the turn of events themselves. The intellectual generation of Herbert Spencer, in its very nature, evinces this contradiction, and reveals this blending of elements.

It would be better, therefore, to define the tendencies of this age as the outcome of an essential duality of character, made up of so many elements that it would be impossible to bring them under one principle. But no matter how different may be the precise quality of each, they still can be grouped round one common impulse, the most elementary of all: the search for stability, for balance; the desire to obey the laws of life and the governing principles of success. England during the Victorian era is no less efficiently, but more consciously and reflectively than in the past, a supple organism, which spontaneously adapts itself to circumstances, and which, wishing for the necessary compensation, intuitively knows where to find it. Indeed, the distinguishing feature of this age is to be found in its broader, more studied grasp of the conditions connected with its own stability.

The motive at the heart of the scientific, practical and rationalist movement, is a striving after balance by way of the intelligence; it is an effort to view, to comprehend, and to organise life and society, according to the inferences which mind draws from nature. The utilitarian character of the main philosophical current of these years shows clearly that it is immediately concerned with the betterment of both body and soul. As the science of mankind and of human society seems then to reach easily grasped conclusions, its adepts believe in the attainment of its object, and the predominance of its spirit accounts for the widespread optimism of the period. In its view, a balance has already been realised, or is in process of realisation, through the spontaneous play of cosmic forces; an irresistible impulsion towards progress is at work. Through a cheap application of this method and of these conclusions, the general public find a superficial self-satisfaction in the mediocre compromise to which they cling.

It is also a desire for balance which lies at the root of the

interventionist movement, and of the revival of idealism; but here the more stable order wished for is one that can be realised only if founded upon sound psychological principles, and a fair proportioning of moral tendencies. As a compensatory and corrective reaction, this attempt to strengthen the social solidarity of the people, and to allow the affective powers of the soul their normal freedom, is accompanied by a keen sense of the evil which it must fight; and thus it introduces a strong wave of pessimism into the self-satisfied mood of the Victorian era.

These movements, opposed as they are, and despite the momentary excesses to which each may go, only counteract each other, and indeed offer no resistance to such counter-action, so long as it is necessary for the safety and prosperity of the whole. It will be seen, therefore, that the search for balance is at once the most general and the most typical feature of this age, and one which permits its very varied aspects to be grouped together. And as this quest for equilibrium is rather like an orderly arrangement, a converging of means towards an end; as, moreover, in its new and accentuated form, it tends rather to be intellectual, or related to an instinct grown intellectual and conscious, it will be recognised that the rational elements of thought—the Neo-Classical elements in art—are indeed the most normal and central of the period; they it is that give it its distinctive character.

To be consulted: Benn, *Modern England*, 1908; McCarthy, *Short History of Our Own Times*, new ed., 1907; Cazamian, *Modern England*, 1911; E. B. Chancellor, *Life in Regency and Early Victorian Times*, 1927; Chesterton, *The Victorian Age in Literature*, 1913; Chevrillon, *La Pensée de Ruskin*, 1909; J. H. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain, 1820-1850*, 1926; Duncan, *Life and Letters of H. Spencer*, 1908; Elton, *Survey of English Literature, 1830-80*, 1920; Halévy, *Histoire du peuple anglais au xix^e siècle*, vol. iii., 1923; Low and Sanders, *Political History of England*, vol. xii., 1907; *Social England*, ed. by H. D. Traill, vol. vi. (1815-85), 1898; Walker, *The Literature of the Victorian Era*, 1910.

CHAPTER II

INTELLECTUALISM AND SCIENCE

1. *The Diffusion of the Utilitarian Doctrine.*—From 1830 onwards, the doctrine of utility exercises a much wider influence than heretofore on public opinion, politics and the national life of the people. Not so much through the denser expressions which it has received from its genuine masters, as through the looser form which their disciples are now imparting to it, this doctrine sways the majority of minds, consciously or unconsciously. Despite the fact that it is still viewed with suspicion by the upholders of the established modes of ethical teaching, it nevertheless constitutes, during the middle years of the century, the effective philosophy of Victorian society. It provides, as it were, a central framework for the relatively regular edifice of ideas which science is tentatively erecting, and where human life will henceforth try to find a shelter.

This success of what is, after all, a kind of generalised rationalism, is the more pronounced as the moral tone of the period is in natural harmony with it. The decline of Romanticism, the establishment of a more stable order, the developing of a positive civilisation which sees the triumph of business instincts, interested motives and wealth—all lend themselves easily to bring about the success of a system based on abstract thought, but aiming at reality, and permeated by practical considerations. Thus it is that utilitarianism, growing more and more from the unceasing progress of the various sciences, seems to answer the needs of far the greater number of men; its critics and adversaries are exceptions.

As often happens, it is among these exceptional minds, reacting against the most normal attitude of their time, that the proportion of original personalities and creative artists is greatest. On the contrary, the now easier diffusion of utilitarian principles is accompanied by an inner weakening of its fecundity as a theme. The writers who are its docile advocates can scarcely

be said to bring any longer to its service any personality in temperament; as far as literature is concerned, their work is negligible.

Therefore it is not among the orthodox philosophical radicals, or the pure economists, that one must look for the most interesting figures in this vast movement; but rather among the thinkers and writers who preserve an individual attitude towards the doctrine; because being more or less free from any explicit adhesion to it, they have diverted its intellectual influence towards concrete problems, or distant branches of knowledge, such as history, theology, criticism.[1]

After the middle of the century, there appears a new and more powerful expression of the desire to understand what exists, and reduce it to some sort of unity; a process extended in the case of Darwin to the whole scale of living beings, and with Spencer, to the entire cosmos. The doctrine of evolution is an intellectual ferment, active and violent enough in itself to inspire in its first apostles something of the creative ardour without which there is no real note of personality in literature; so, while they owe their place in the history of English thought mainly to the energy they bring to their scientific effort, the work which this effort has produced is not devoid of human value.

2. *Philosophy: John Stuart Mill.*—John Stuart Mill[2] is con-

[1] The active supporters of utilitarianism in politics, when once the reform of Electoral Rights had been effected, turned their attention to the cause of Free Trade. Richard Cobden (1804-65) and John Bright (1811-89) devoted themselves to the service of this cause and contributed in bringing about its triumph, the first by his sober and persuasive eloquence, the second by the more ardent, more moving tone of his oratory, charged, as it was, with a very high moral persuasiveness. Cobden, *Speeches*, 1870; see *Life* by Morley, 1881. Bright, *Speeches*, 1878; see *Life* by Trevelyan, 1913.

[2] John Stuart Mill, son of James Mill (see above, Book V. chap. iii.), born in London in 1806, educated very systematically by his father, showed extraordinary precocity. Attached to the central service of the East India Company (1823-58), he led, at first, a life wholly engrossed in study, against which, however, the needs of his sensibility reacted more and more, from 1836 onward. He wrote for radical papers, and, above all, for the *Westminster Review*, many articles, a number of which were collected at a later date (*Dissertations and Discussions*, 4 vols., 1859-75). He published *A System of Logic*, etc. (1843); *Principles of Political Economy* (1848). In 1851 he married Mrs. Taylor, who brought a deep influence to bear upon his thought; she died in 1858 at Avignon, and it was here, beside her last resting-place, that Mill spent his remaining years, save from 1865 to 1868, when he was a Member of Parliament. His other publications include: *On Liberty* (1859), *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), *Utilitarianism* (1863), *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (1865), *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (1865), *On the Subjection of Women* (1869); he died in 1873, leaving an *Autobiography* (1873) and *Three Essays on Religion* (1874). *Correspon-*

nected with the intellectualism of the Utilitarians by immediate descent, and by direct moral discipleship. He is the product of an education which was entirely controlled by this doctrine; and he remains its most illustrious representative. But his life and work bear the stamp of a dual character; and even with him, in this stronghold of rational thought, do we find that the influences of psychological Romanticism, which by this time have become part and parcel of all minds, are deeply felt.

He was never disloyal to the duty of seeking truth by means of reason. It was out of intellectual sincerity that he came to accept, by the side of intelligence, other instruments of knowledge and action. He broadened the system of ideas, either too narrow or too poor, which he had received from a school of thought to which he never ceased to belong. In imbuing rationalism with feeling and flexibility, he believed that he was not destroying it, but rather completing it. Whatever one may think the theoretical success of this synthesis to have been, it would be unfair not to recognise the stability and the beauty of a character founded upon it.

Mill developed at first along straight lines, the willing follower of Bentham and of his father. Then came a crisis of conscience, of which he has left us a clear account. His nature, which had been artificially withered, thenceforth expanded in the fullness of its powers; and with the reality of feelings, there was borne in upon him the existence of new mental shades. Thus was fertilised the germ of an inner progress, which had a decisive effect in modifying his thought. He read Wordsworth, became receptive to poetic suggestion, acknowledged the claims of the heart, and discovered in everything around him a concrete and unsuspected wealth. The superior merit of his philosophy is to be found in this much finer adaptation to an experience more objectively registered. He was the first in England to perceive the essential conflict of the tendencies between which his age was divided; and he set up an antithesis, which the course of time has confirmed, between Bentham and Coleridge; between systematic intellectualism on the one hand, inherited from the

dance avec d'Eichthal, 1898; *Lettres à Auguste Comte*, ed. by *Lévy-Bruhl*, 1899, *Letters*, ed. by Elliot, 1910. See Bain, *J. S. Mill*, 1882; Douglas, *J. S. Mill*, 1895; Sir L. Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, vol. iii., 1900; Taine, *Le Positivisme anglais, étude sur Stuart Mill*, 1864, incorporated in his *Littérature anglaise*, vol v.

eighteenth century, and on the other the mysticism of intuition, which had been revived during the Romantic era.

Mill's work is great, and has not ceased to prove its fecundity. The fruit of a nobly scrupulous thought, and of a meditative humanity of heart, it looked forward boldly enough to keep abreast of the future. It owes its worth to the cogency of its reasoning, but no less to its courage in facing difficult problems; to the sharpness of analysis, but no less to the realism of imagination.

As a logician, he invests a purely empirical theory of induction with the rigour of precise formulæ; he unravels in a convincing manner the tangled paths which experience follows in order to draw ever-justified conclusions from the mere habits of things. It is upon facts, and facts alone, that science and the coherence of the universe are based; but the certitude thus evolved, fragile as it is when compared with our craving for the absolute, is illuminated with such vivid psychological light, and so strongly traced back to the actual processes of the mind, that a conviction grows irresistibly upon us: in no other manner has man put together, piecemeal and by much toil, the humble tutelary edifice which can satisfy his need for an order of things outside himself. Similarly, the metaphysician in Mill reconciles the imperious authority of that fact, the world of the senses, with the scepticism of abstract reflection, in a formula where the tradition of Berkeley commingles with all the positive instincts of British genius; namely, that matter is a "permanent possibility of sensations." Mind remains, as empiricism would have it, a more or less closely woven network of ideas and images, assembled by the laws of mental association; but if Mill severely criticises the intuitive theory of Hamilton, he is not far from admitting that personality and memory imply the existence of a more organic relationship between the various elements of the "ego."

As a moralist, Mill further develops the doctrine of utility, and does not believe that he violates its principle by seeking to infuse it with a finer meaning. Through a more exact exercise of the faculty of introspection he links up more closely the ethical thesis of Bentham with all the immemorial experiences which all religions have consecrated. What is happiness, he contends, but something which evaporates when sought after directly? The

very constitution of the soul makes happiness dependent upon a mode of life occupied with other things. And in the range of pleasures there exist irreducible differences of quality; such pleasures, for example, as emanate from altruistic motives and from the highest human endeavours have a virtue that cannot be matched among those of the senses. Mill in thus correcting what he understands to be a too elementary form of empiricism, does not as yet claim anything save experience; but in this experience was perhaps implied a direct denial of the simple rule of intelligent egoism.

It is, however, to the science of social life that he has devoted the best of his thought, so generous and yet ever in touch with facts. Utilitarian radicalism had, it seemed, definitively established the foundations of democratic liberty. But the liberty of the individual is by no means a clear or a self-sufficient principle; it must be defined, and must be combined in an organic whole with the limits imposed by social life. The law of majorities is not a perfect expression of justice in a democratic state; more supple modes will have to be found in order to represent all shades of opinion. Every fully conscious being has the right to share in the government of all by all; and women, unjustly excluded, must be admitted into the pale of electoral privileges. Political economy should be no longer the impassible theory of the natural link which binds up the maximum of production with the greatest independence of the productive agents; it should purpose as well to study, and to improve, the distribution of wealth; and if in this domain the intervention of the State, as the organ of collective interests, were necessary, then the uncompromisingness of a doctrine should finally yield before the more sacred demands of life.

This austere soul thus had in it something of the sweetness of charity. Mill's highly intellectual figure is endued with the warm glow of a moral radiation to be felt even in his work. His clear and simple prose grows animated but rarely; still, the honesty of mind and the sincerity of heart which are revealed in it imbue it with a sober charm.

3. *History: Macaulay, Buckle, Lecky, etc.*—After Romanticism has quickened men's interest in national origins and revived the cult of the Past, the modern idea of history, of which Hume in the eighteenth century had already given a very able sketch,

begins to evolve under an influence, in this case complementary and not antagonistic: that of an age when science deliberately undertakes the complete study of the facts relating to man. Utilitarian rationalism counts for much in the formation of an atmosphere that is favourable to the examination of the causes which may account for the development of peoples; as a doctrine, it is permeated by the spirit of determinism; the idea that the sphere of individual actions is not outside the control of general laws, but is subject to certain exterior necessities, lies at the root of a diffused philosophy, a kind of more or less conscious positivism, which, henceforth, governs the methods of historians. At the same time, the traces left by a writer like Scott on the imagination of all those whose effort it is to resuscitate lost ages, together with the stimulus which Romanticism brought to the feeling of national continuity, are too strong, too important to be forgotten. But if one had to classify history after 1830, it would be to place it among the branches of knowledge in which the guiding spirit is a desire for rational truth.[1]

Already before 1830 Hallam[2] had written works of power and concentration, where the desire for intellectual honesty took a first place in the writer's inspiration, allying itself to a very stern sense of moral justice. His study of the English Constitution was destined to remain for many years the standard work on a subject of special interest. In it a reticent British pride can hardly be distinguished from a sort of juridical religion, the worship of liberty in order, which, if it does not produce an impassioned narrative, at least lends it a soul. Between the royal prerogative, of foreign origin, on the one hand, and on the other the need for independence, rooted in the oldest traditions of the race, there was waged a long conflict, the stages of which Hallam narrates in a sensible style, not exempt from some elaborate polish.

Macaulay[3] is not a philosopher, nor has he anything about

[1] From now onwards, the methods of the German historians began to exercise an influence in England; the *History of Rome*, by Niebuhr, was translated in 1828-32.

[2] Henry Hallam (1777-1859): *A View of the State of Europe During the Middle Ages*, 1818; *The Constitutional History of England*, etc., 1827; *Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the XVth, XVIth and XVIIth Centuries*, 1837-39. See Mignet, *Eloges historiques*, 1864.

[3] Thomas Babington Macaulay, born in 1800 near London, came of middle-class family, studied at Cambridge, practised at the Bar, was an active contributor to the *Edinburgh Review;* elected to Parliament in 1830, he was entrusted with a

him of the Radical. Judged by his opinions he is a Whig, sharing the average feelings of his compatriots and, in fact, tending to side with the conservative majority. But his liberalism is not purely instinctive; there is a lucidity about it which savours of system. In the growth of Macaulay's thought one can trace the very definite influence of utilitarian philosophy, and of the powerful magnetism which it did not fail to exercise in his generation. He owes it a taste for intellectuality, the habit and need of it, and to some degree a pride in it; as well as the sense of modernity, of progress, and the craving for logic. Combined with the natural gifts of a well-balanced temperament and of a clear intelligence, that influence endowed him with a faculty of construction, which links him up in a remarkable way with writers of the French type.

He has a deeper and more fundamental notion of order than of truth. To him truth is before all to be found in order; and so with him the man of letters and the artist are superior to the historian. His main concern is by no means the anxious search after the exact shade, nor is it a scrupulous reverence of facts, nor even the care of documentation; but after his mind has gathered a general impression, and formed a thesis, through an inner process of elaboration more intuitive than it is precise, then does he concentrate all the vigour of his talent to uphold this cause. And behind the advocate there is a man, with strongly preconceived and unalterable ideas, which he obeys without any real struggle. He believes that the first duty of history is to teach; therefore he teaches; and his general doctrine espouses with astonishing fidelity the contours of the moral and political faith which would be that of an eminent contributor to the *Edinburgh Review.*

This intrusion of the writer's personality in his work is to a certain extent inevitable; and only at the expense of a very griev-

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magistracy in India (1834-38), where he was engaged in drawing up a penal code. Returning to England, he published in 1842 his collection of verse, *Lays of Ancient Rome;* was again, on two occasions, Member of Parliament, occupied the post of Secretary of State; raised to the peerage in 1857, he died in 1859 His *Critical and Historical Essays* were collected in 3 vols, 1843 *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, incomplete, appeared in 5 vols, from 1849 to 1861. His *Speeches* were published in 1854. *Works*, ed by Trevelyan, 1866. See the biography by Trevelyan, 1876; studies by Morison (English Men of Letters), 1882; Jebb, 1900; L. Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, 3rd series, 1879. Taine, *Littérature anglaise*, vol. v.

ous sacrifice does the objective science of the past, as it is conceived to-day, free itself from it in practice, or give itself an illusion that it does. His happy unconsciousness lends Macaulay scope for animation, oratorical delights, and a warmth of dramatic narration. If he is no longer considered by the professional historians as an unexceptionable member of the craft, he still remains a great writer. No one has known better how to arrange great historical canvases, or manage the narration of an episode; and his tremendous popularity went to prove the hold his art had upon the general public.

Too much should not be made of Macaulay's recognition and profession of the likeness between his own art and that of the novelist; his imagination, if it is not completely dominated by the search for pure truth, at least serves it with great success and in original ways. In the sifting of documents or in the citation of sources he does not show the meticulous accuracy of modern technique; but, on the other hand, his mind is awake to the value of concrete testimony, and he has the intuitive sense of it; he shows a familiarity with the atmosphere, the intimate life, the picturesque setting of an epoch, that is greater and more solid, just as the picture in which he traces it all is more detailed and instructive, than has ever been the case before him. He knows how to revive customs, and surround events and people with the influences which help us to understand them; and he can also penetrate character, and interpret it as a master of historical psychology, so long as the limits of his nature do not narrow his sympathy. To sum up, he has moulded together in a synthesis, incomplete certainly but broad enough, along with the ancient ideal of moving and didactic history, the evocative manner of a Scott, and that more positive notion of social causes which forms, after the contribution of Romanticism, the new progress of the science of the Past.

His errors and his weak points have been emphasised with a severity often excessive. Looked upon as the artistic reconstruction of an age—the transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century in England—his *History* retains a permanent value. But his *Essays*, where the severe attention to method is less needed, and where he enjoys more fully the sense of a free scope, possess equal qualities, and do not lay themselves open to the same criticism. The trend of thought throughout

their pages is very similar to that of the *History;* very often in their choice of subject, and almost always in their style, they play the dual part of literary exercises and historical studies. Literature here is interwoven with life, and the individual reinstated in his epoch. The substance of the *Essays* is thinner, and in certain cases has been found to be inconsistent; they have their defects of injustice or superficiality; but in compensation, when the theme suits the temperament of the author, then their merits are striking; and even when the reader's satisfaction is not unmixed, yet he derives a very great pleasure from their pages. They glow with a brilliance that is the outcome of the sincere interest taken by a cultivated, generalising and eloquent mind in the pageant of human life; their merit is also due to the skill which can throw into relief the characteristics and contrasts of facts and of souls; finally, and above all, they owe most to the style, fluent, clear, and yet enhanced by individual touches, skilful antitheses and sparkling epigrams; at one time periodical, at another condensed into short and pithy sentences; clever enough to display flexibility and variety, yet lacking the absolute simplicity and naturalness which could relieve it from a suspicion of artifice, grandiloquence, or occasional lapses in good taste.

Macaulay has paid very dearly for his too perfect harmony with an age which acclaimed his talent, but never stressed its relativity. As was said even during Victorian times, he has too much assurance, is too infallibly dogmatic in his ways of thinking and feeling, and further, is not self-critical enough. His bourgeois intellectualism showed the narrowness of its outlook, as soon as a revolt began against the Philistine satisfaction of a progress which was unconscious of its mediocrity. His merits, however, have stood the test of this inevitable reaction; and his name is still associated with an attractive and, at the same time, reliable interpretation of certain aspects of the nation's history.

The unfinished but very significant work of Buckle [1] establishes the closest and the most direct contact between history and *philosophic rationalism.* While he accepts and, indeed, goes beyond the point of view of the English Utilitarians, Buckle

[1] Henry Thomas Buckle, born in Kent in 1821, of middle-class family, was educated privately; possessing independent means, he travelled, was influenced by liberal ideas and by Comte; prepared himself by deep study for his great work, *History of Civilisation in England*, 1857-61, which his premature death in 1862 left unfinished. See J. M. Robertson, *Buckle and His Critics*, 1859.

adopts the more ample determinism of the French Positivists; he holds that just as individual actions, so the destiny of peoples and the growth of civilisations come under the wide scope of natural causality, the laws of which can be discovered. This quest is properly the task of the historian. By combining the doctrine of Comte with the teaching of Montesquieu, Buckle finds the influences of the physical surroundings and of the climate at the very core of the succession of historical periods. But Nature is by no means the sole agent of formation in the life of mankind; through its stimuli it gives birth to intelligence, and this, more than moral conscience, is the active force which, in turn, modifies reality, and with the progress of science increases the power of man over the universe. The ambition and, in some measure, the method of sociological history are thus defined, and applied to examples—certain aspects of France and Scotland—as the preface to a more complete study of modern English civilisation. The boldness of this tentative effort to explain, by material conditions, the spiritual originality of a people, but also to seek in its ideas the mainspring of its social life, and, again, the great success this effort met with, go to show in what direction the deep movement of thought is progressing, even before the appearance of the evolution theory. The ambition of Buckle bears some analogy to that of Taine.

As is frequently the case in England, Buckle was the disciple of no master, but formed his views through the instincts of a strong intelligence. He worked upon material brought together by a personal faculty of assimilation. His erudition has not the thoroughness needed for such an enterprise. His clear style, animated by a warm demonstrative zeal, lacks attention to detail; there is nothing artistic about it. But the value of the work lies in the energy of the main conception, in the philosophic divination therein displayed, and in the imaginative grasp of the relationships between the most diverse elements of concrete reality, or of the world of science.

It is less easy to assign a place to Froude [1] among the thinkers

[1] James Anthony Froude, born in 1818 in Devon, the son of an Anglican cleric, studied at Oxford, took orders; but renouncing orthodoxy, he left his preferments and devoted himself to literature. After publishing two anonymous works, *Shadows of the Clouds*, 1847; *The Nemesis of Faith*, 1848, he adopted the philosophy of Carlyle, collaborated in radical reviews (articles collected in 4 vols., *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, 1867-83), edited *Fraser's Magazine* (1860-74), published *A History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish*

of his time, grouped as they are round two distinct intellectual poles. On the one hand he is strongly influenced by rationalism; he gives up the traditional forms of faith, and with his breaking away from the Church comes a deep-felt crisis in his life. But, on the other hand, is he not the disciple of Carlyle, after having been for a brief spell that of Newman? His moral nature has a vein of ardour and passion; whatever cause he takes up is invested with the accent of personality; the growing religion of the Empire stirs and exalts him. A whole part of his nature is critical and clear-sighted, while another is imaginative and emotive. A divided soul, he knew no rest. He gave himself up to the cold discipline of historical research, but used it as the instrument for his prejudices; as the biographer of his master Carlyle, he made the idol the object of a ruthless search for cruel truths; and behind this search there is the faint suspicion that the writer is secretly striving after dramatic effect.

Judged from his work as a whole, he was mistaken when he fancied he devoted himself to the severe methodical pursuits of thought. There is no sure precision, either in his practice, or yet in the desire behind it; he is not ready for the mutilation of self which precision demands. As the historian of England or as a biographer, he has relied upon intuition for his essential certitudes. Many others have done the same, and, no doubt, the greatest historians among them. He has exercised control over his intuitions, and thrown light upon them as best possible; he was aware of the value of documents and archives, and was not averse to utilising them; he went to them for support and confirmation, for the substance of a story whose real object is still to throw the significance of things into greater relief.. This, therefore, is not his weak point. But his preferences are strong, and he makes no attempt to conceal them; they bear upon vital points in political or religious history; what he reveals of Carlyle's private life is painful; as if he were predestined for the part of polemist, he always rubs up against some susceptibilities, and

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Armada, 1856-70; *The English in Ireland in the XVIIIth Century*, 1872-74; *Cæsar*, 1879; chosen by Carlyle as his biographer, he completed the task in 4 vols. (1882-84), a work which raised violent controversy. *Oceana* (1886) and *The West Indies* (1888) combined travel impressions with political opinions. Elected to a professorship at Oxford in 1892, he published other various historical works, and died in 1894. See Paul, *Life of Froude*, 1905; Leslie Stephen, *Studies of a Biographer*, vol. iii., 1902.

creates an atmosphere of controversy; so that, himself showing no indulgence, he was, in turn, treated unsparingly; not only has his inability to perceive facts in an objective way been fully exposed, but also his incapability to quote documents correctly.

This inexactitude comes as a revelation. In spite of his conscious effort, the outcome of honest intention, Froude is attracted and swayed more by the character and possible intensity of things, than by the abstract mystery of their vanished truth. The lapses in his material attention can be traced to no other cause. As these lapses scarcely concern anything beyond the mere automatic part of his inner activity, they leave untouched, in all that is voluntary, the value of his ingenious and striking constructions, in which the past is organised according to the law of a strong personality. The work of Froude retains its vital interest; it is saved from oblivion by the inquiring nature of the curious mind behind it, as well as by the boldness of a venturesome but penetrating judgment; it is still alive with the stir of our contemporary problems, which Froude often transposed, as it were, into another age. It has variety, and touches upon many subjects, with a fertility of thought that is occasionally diffuse; its style, easy, animated and picturesque, has gained for it many readers. The philosophy which it teaches is not original; its favourite themes are the ordered arrangement of centuries round the figures of great men, the fecundity of heroic energy, during the great crises of mankind, the presence of a providential destiny behind momentous issues; it was none other than the doctrine which Carlyle was continually preaching. But Froude develops and illustrates it, in the tone of a more simple, less fiercely strained exposition; he thus has popularised, along with the feeling of history and the taste for it, some of the sentiments which have gone to form the moralising imperialism of modern England.

Considered as historians, Froude and Freeman[1] have more than one trait in common, which the difference of their natures cannot obliterate. With the one, as with the other, the study of

[1] Edward Augustus Freeman, born in 1823, studied at Oxford, where he first lived as an independent man of letters, then lectured on history from 1884 until his death in 1892. His publications were many, and include: *A History of Architecture*, 1849; *The History of Federal Government*, 1865; *The History of the Norman Conquest of England*, 1867-79; *The Historical Geography of Europe*, 1881; *The Reign of William Rufus*, 1882; etc. See Stephens, *Life and Letters of Freeman*, 1895.

the past is wholly enlivened by the obsession of the present. Freeman has still less concentration than his rival, while he lacks the other's gifts of philosophy and irony. He is even more carried away by a more undisguised passion, whether it be political zeal or patriotism. The literary interest of his work is second-rate; and its technical value is more or less questioned, according to the various fortunes of the thesis which is still associated with his name: the Germanic origin of English institutions. This work remains very representative; it is one of the signs, and was *one of the means, of the formation of a keener historical* consciousness, which points, in Victorian England, to the growth of a surer and more dogmatic self-assertion. The influence of this mood prolongs the action of Romanticism, and tends to support in principle the opposition of British genius to Latin culture.

Lecky,[1] on the contrary, is of the rationalist school of Gibbon and *Buckle. He writes history in the light of a central psycho*logical fact, the decisive advent of the notion of cause in individual or collective destiny, the gradual disappearance of a passive or unreflecting adhesion of minds as the instrument of their accord. It is none other than the thesis of eighteenth-century French philosophy that is again taken up, and put forth in a spirit of even greater audacity; and thus, for the Victorian age—or, at least, for what is most characteristic in it—this effort of reason by which the moral sciences, following upon the teaching of Comte and the Utilitarians, are regarded as essentially analogous to the physical sciences, is in a way a return to a kind of intellectual tradition, which had been interrupted for a brief spell by the triumph of Romanticism.

Lecky's mind has been fashioned in the school of this new mental outlook, which calls for a satisfactory linking-up of the various terms of an historical whole, and of all material and spiritual facts—an outlook that is the peculiar attribute of sociological thought. He allows for the activity of ideas, and fits them in with the development of economic and social history. The belief in progress, the optimism of the age of Spencer, form, as it were, the very soul of his work, as lucid in thought as it is calm

[1] William Edward Hartpole Lecky (1838-1903), born in Dublin *The Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland*, 1861; *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, 1865; *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, 1869; *History of England in the XVIIIth Century*, 1878-90, *Democracy and Liberty*, 1896; *The Map of Life*, 1899. See *Memoir* by his wife, 1909

necessary vigour to combine his conclusions into a well-ordered synthesis (the *Constitutional History* of Stubbs[1] offers a good example of this); or that the scrupulous honesty of a worker can give to his pages a kind of austere but contagious glow, and that the love for truth, brought to bear on the story of dramatic events, leaves them much of their power to stir the imagination of the reader, as with Gardiner,[2] the historian of the Civil War; or, finally, there is the example of a scholar who, engaged in the study of charters, and most anxious to keep within the limits of documentary precision, still has in himself a fresh spring of vitality, a faculty of sympathetic insight, and manages soberly to combine into one creative impulse the joy of literary sensitiveness and the keen legal intelligence of the past.[3]

[illegible] *Liberalism in Religion.*—The scientific spirit, widening its hol[illegible] now reaches the field of reli[illegible] menace, or a principle of transformation. From 1830 onwards, the struggle becomes more apparent between science and traditional theology. In this trial, belief sometimes seems to be overcome; the faith of many is shaken; and many have to break away, not without an inner disruption, from the fold of the church. At the same time, others in greater numbers make the necessary sacrifices to the spirit of free inquiry, and reconcile former assertions with new formulæ. With nearly all, this crisis, the gravest which can assail the conscience of man, stirs up a feeling of deep uneasiness, the direct or distant effects of which are widely reflected in the moral life of the whole age.

Under the pressure of an opinion which is still very homogeneous, scepticism, in the middle years of the Victorian era, is almost always silent; it retires, as it were, from view, or if it shows itself, it is in another guise. When after 1860[4] comes the open profession of absolute free-thinking, it raises a scandal. Already before this date the presence of a fermenting element

[1] *William Stubbs* (1825-1901): *The Constitutional History of England in Its Origin and Development*, 1874-78.

[2] Samuel Rawson Gardiner (1829-1902): *A History of England from the Accession of James I. to the Outbreak of the Civil War*, 1883-84, *History of the Great Civil War*, 1886-91; *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate* (unfinished), 1894-1901.

[3] Frederic William Maitland (1850-1906) *History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I.* (with Sir F. Pollock), 1893; *Domesday Book and Beyond*, 1897; *Township and Borough*, 1898, etc.

[4] See the *Life of Charles Bradlaugh* by his daughter, 1894.

of pure religious denial in the collective thought of the nation is none the less plainly recognisable. It explains at once the bitter tone of certain fears, and also the strength of certain reactions. Towards the end of the period, philosophical doubters, the self-restraint of the human mind giving up the endeavour to reach the first cause of things, describe themselves by a new name, the subdued aggressiveness of which does not disarm the prejudice of believers.[1]

The liberal movement within the Anglican Church itself has quite another aim in view, even if the results do not always go to show it. It begins as early as the first years of the century, and develops with the progress of science, the revival of rationalism in the form of the utilitarian doctrine; together with the influence of German criticism and exegesis. Coleridge is a free believer; he interprets the Scriptures according to his intuitive sense of their moral fruitfulness, and does not seek after any surer proof of their authority.[2] This mystical mood is rather foreign to the more drily lucid thought of an intellectual group who at Oxford, about 1830, are endeavouring to introduce greater elasticity into the belief in biblical inspiration, and to bring it into the category of relative values. This attempt comes as a shock to the instincts of the average believer, and even to the liberal type of churchman. Those thinkers[3] consider the religious problem as an object of pure science. Their effort results in a reaction; and the "Oxford Movement," or "Catholic Revival," springs from the spirit of opposition which they arouse.

Their immediate disciples, to whom public opinion is more tolerant, organise the critical tendencies with a living body of eager and glowing affirmations. They give doubt an inner impulse not towards negation, but towards faith; a moral faith with a Thomas Arnold and a Robertson, a social one with a Maurice and a Kingsley.[4]

The method and conclusions of the German exegetists, meanwhile, are exercising a growing influence in England; their prin-

[1] The word "agnostic" was coined by Huxley in 1869. See *An Agnostic's Apology*, by Leslie Stephen, 1892.

[2] See above, Book V. chap. i. sect. 3.

[3] The most noteworthy are Richard Whately and Renn Dickson Hampden.

[4] Thomas Arnold, 1775-1842; see study by R. J. Campbell, 1927; by A. Whitridge, 1928. Frederick Robertson, 1816-53. Frederick Denison Maurice, 1805-72: *The Kingdom of Christ*, 1837; *The Religions of the World*, 1847. For Kingsley, see later, chap. iii. sect. 3.

cipal works are made better known through translations.[1] Shortly after 1850, a whole group of thinkers is formed who proclaim themselves their disciples, or, at least, seek therein the general themes of their inspiration. The influence of science, and that of liberal theology, are combined in the minds of the supporters of this somewhat shifting spirit, whose central aim is to reconcile independence of thought with belief. The "Broad Church"[2] is essentially tolerant; it accepts or tries to promote the co-operation of different religions and nationalities; it tends to qualify or eliminate dogma, reduces the part of the supernatural to a minimum, or replaces it by the inexplicable phenomena of psychology; it emphasises what can bring all men of good will together: the feeling of human solidarity and the practice of duty. This attitude, which varies from a philosophical Christianity to a faith purely human, in its more extreme forms rejoins the agnosticism of the sceptics. It contributes to pervade the intellectual atmosphere with an element of doubt; and to spread further an impression that reason is gradually gaining the victory over the irrational demands of the will to believe.[3]

5. *Moral and Literary Criticism: Matthew Arnold.*—More definitely than any English writer before him, Matthew Arnold[4]

[1] Julius Hare and Connop Thirlwall translated Schleiermacher: *A Critical Essay on the Gospel of St. Luke*, 1825. George Eliot translated Strauss (*Life of Jesus*, 1846) and Feuerbach (*Essence of Christianity*, 1854).

[2] The expression "Broad Church" was proposed by A. H. Clough, employed by Stanley in 1850, while in 1853 it was looked upon as an accepted term.

[3] The principal figures in this movement are Benjamin Jowett, 1817-93; Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, 1815-81, Mark Pattison, 1813-84. The main episodes in its history are the publication of critical studies, *Essays and Reviews*, 1860; that of the *Commentary on the Pentateuch (1862-79) by Bishop Colenso, and that of the Ecce Homo* (1865) by J. R. Seeley (1834-95).

[4] Matthew, son of Thomas Arnold (see above, sect 4), born in 1822, studied at Rugby and Oxford, and from 1851 onwards performed the duties of Inspector of Schools, a post which he retained for the greater part of his life. After several first efforts in poetry he published *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*, 1849; *Empedocles on Etna*, 1852; two series of *Poems* (1853-55), and a tragedy in verse, *Merope* (1858). The *New Poems* of 1867 included a few additions, but only in the nature of short pieces. After a mission to the Continent to study pedagogical systems he wrote *The Popular Education of France*, etc., 1861; *A French Eton*, [illegible] Appointed to the Chair of [illegible] *Translating Homer*, [illegible] *the Study of Celtic Literature*, 1867. [illegible] criticism of society (*Culture and Anarchy*, 1869), and of religion in England: *Saint Paul and Protestantism*, 1870; *Literature and Dogma*, 1873; *God and the Bible*, 1875; *Last Essays on Church and Religion*, 1877. He died in 1888. *Poems*, 1840-67, Oxford ed., 1909; *Works*, ed. de luxe, 1904; *Letters*, ed. by Russell, 1901 See the studies or biographies of Saintsbury, 1899; *Paul* (*English Men of Letters*), 1902; Dawson, *Matthew Arnold and His Relation to the Thought of His Time*, 1904; Bickley, *Matthew Arnold and His Poetry*, 1911.

based his work and his life upon the intellectual principle of criticism. Professional philosophers, such as Hume, had put every idea, and some social facts, to the test of a severe examination. But, as yet, no one had studied from the psychological point of view the very attitude of the national mind, the focus, as it were, from which all the various ways and habits of the British people radiate out; and, discovering the radical weakness in the clear realisation of self, had endeavoured by persistent and multiple effort to diffuse self-knowledge, from that centre, over every field of thought and action. This was Arnold's mission, and in it his personality takes on its distinctive character. The poet in him, although intimately associated with the critic, does not work in complete unison with him; he confesses the anguish of a courageous thought; he avows the melancholy which mingles with the clear-sightedness of the modern mind; he reveals a more complex and more attractive sensibility than that of the critic; he is, in many ways, nearer to our own age. He will probably better stand the test of time.[1] But in the history of literature, as in that of ideas, Arnold the prose writer is a more commanding figure; he has exercised a wider influence. He has been in the broadest sense the preacher of the doctrine of intellectual culture, to a civilisation mainly satisfied with the success of empirical ambitions.

To preach upon the text of intelligence is a ticklish task to a man with a sense of humour. It demands a dexterous touch. Arnold is not always free from a shade of priggishness. His magistral authority was at times too sure of itself; the more so, as he does not on all occasions follow out his own principle to the end. He wants the activity of the mind to play freely round all habits and beliefs, and to accept no values unless they have been revised. This current of critical thought bathing the dim unconscious recesses of the soul, and restoring its spontaneous freshness to all the inner personality of man, this spirit of calm self-posssesion, remind us of the teaching of the Greeks, and of that of Goethe. The wisdom which Arnold thus invokes is elevating and beautiful. He has lived up to it to the utmost of his ability, and has given attractive examples of his faith. Still, he has not risen at all points to the height of his own ideal. Prejudices, narrowness of outlook, passive ways of thinking, have

[1] For the poet in Arnold, see chap. vi. sect. 6.

limited or warped his mental perspective in certain directions. His social and moral philosophy is at once bold and timorous. He was unconscious of the fact that in many respects he could not and did not want to see clearly. Yet his outlook is none the less honest and frank, and often proves very penetrating.

Arnold as a literary critic has clearly defined doctrines, a scale of merits founded in principle. With him a new school may be said to begin. None of his predecessors has had such a coherent set of ideas, nor have they applied or explained their views with so elegant a precision. The profound desire of this age to return to a standard of beauty which reason can comprehend, and whose form reason can control, is revealed best of all in the effort of Arnold to renew classical tradition, to base it on the now better understood example of the Ancients, on that of the Moderns as well, wherever the latter have sought to respect the sense of balance, so essential a feature of art. He is full of antiquity—above all of the Greek models—but, on the other hand, he appreciates and he loves French measure and subtlety. The knowledge that England possesses to-day of the original genius of France has been gleaned partly from Arnold. He judges books as one trained to take account of their construction, and of the finer shades of their style. His judgments, however, are subject to whims. He depends more than he thinks upon his intuitive sympathies; and these with Arnold are sometimes at fault—as in the case of Shelley—or evince a very imperfect sense of the true proportions of their objects. He is not anxious enough, either, to submit to the discipline of study; his method at times savours of improvisation. But he has written of Homer better than any of his contemporaries; his theory of the Celtic spirit, however adventurous it may be, has been fruitful; the preferences implied in his admirations disclose a personal temperament, at once orthodox and capable of initiative. Finally, he defends his taste with a lucidity of expression and an easy eloquence which not only surpass Macaulay by far, but are in themselves merits of a high order.

The newest and strongest part of Arnold's criticism is that which bears upon the mind of the English people. He believes in formulæ, and employs them unreservedly. The English aristocracy is "barbarian" to him, the middle class are "Philistines,"

while the people are a "populace"; and thus these three classes suffer in diverse ways, and to different degrees, through an underestimation of spiritual values. This arises from the fact that in the secular struggle waged between the powers making for intellectual liberty—"Hellenism"—and those advocating moral discipline—"Hebraism"—the English nation has taken sides with the latter; so that the exclusive preoccupation of conduct has withered up souls which are being lost in their eagerness for salvation. The need of England is to seek for the refinement of culture, the "sweetness" of a "light" which shines only for the beauty of the radiance it sheds. Arnold has felt the hard utilitarian element that is to be found in a certain kind of moral obsession; he has felt the virtue of disinterestedness; but he has not carried his analysis to its ultimate psychological elements. About the same period, Nietzsche was working out a singularly more vigorous doctrine. Arnold's criticism, however, does not lack strength; and although he is indebted to Goethe for the principle of it, he proceeds to apply it to his compatriots in a way that is indeed revealing.

From the criticism of manners Arnold passes by a natural transition to that of religion. In matters biblical he cannot lay claim to any particular competence, and his adversaries have not failed to reproach him with it. Though he lacks the authority necessary to solve exegetical problems, he extends to the domain of religious beliefs the exercise of an illuminating common sense, sharpened by inner observation. Although the line of his thought does not exactly coincide with the central direction of the Rationalist movement, and despite the reserves he arrays against the modern ambitions of science, he really continues the effort of liberal theology. In place of dogma, and of the definite inspiration of the Scriptures, he substitutes a kind of general philosophy, which brings them into accord with all the creative process of human conscience. The thought of Renan, that of Strauss and of Feuerbach, are in the background of this doctrine. The conception of the Godhead divests itself, as it were, of personality, and tends towards an ethical pantheism. We perceive God as a diffused current of volition and desire which, within us and without, is directed towards the moral ends of the universe. The enemies of true religious zeal are, on the one hand, indifference and, on the other, fanaticism; the most desirable form of faith

is that which is regulated by a discriminating and cultured intelligence.

There is nothing of the revolutionary spirit in the work of Arnold. In making certain sacrifices, which he deems inevitable, to the principle of criticism in all fields, he is but following the instinct of a conservative nature. But he intellectualises and brings to consciousness the national preferences which he accepts, and in so doing he adopts a strongly hostile attitude as to the national habit of empirical unconsciousness. He is the prophet of equanimity by way of a flexible habit of reasoning. The prose-writer in Arnold and the poet are both at the centre of a period, of which they represent the distinctive character with all its dominant traits.

6. Evolution: Darwin, Spencer and Huxley.—The work of Darwin[1] cannot be said to belong to literature, if in the definition of literary work is presupposed an effort towards artistic expression. But it has most powerfully affected the thought of a whole century; it has modified the outlook of the scientist, and, gradually in turn, that of every thinker; while its contagious influence has spread over imaginative life and the æsthetic activity of the mind. It is a work which takes its place in the front rank of the history of ideas, and, therefore, the historian of literature cannot afford to neglect it.

Darwin's is the very type of the scientific intelligence; he is essentially the man in whom the desire for verified truth is the ruling passion, indeed almost the only passion. The kind of truth which he wants is concrete, and based on experience. The need for simple unity which is the mainspring of all inquiry that aims at an explanation, is in the case of Darwin accompanied and

[1] Charles Robert Darwin, grandson of Erasmus Darwin (see above, Book IV. chap. v. sect. 2), was born in 1809 at Shrewsbury, studied at Edinburgh and Cambridge, and was attracted at an early age to the study of Natural Science. From 1831 to 1836 he journeyed as a naturalist in the *Beagle*, a cruise which brought him into touch with life in all parts of the world. In 1842 he settled down to toil and study in the country until his death in 1882 Before 1840 he had already conceived the first idea of his theory, but laboured at it for many years, putting it to the test of repeated experiments, before drawing up his deductive principles. In 1858, in agreement with Alfred Russel Wallace, who had, on his part, come to analogous conclusions, he contributed a paper to the Linnæan Society on "The Tendency of Species to Form Varieties," etc. In 1859 he published *The Origin of Species*, etc.; and then followed in succession his great works, notably *The Variation of Plants and Animals Under Domestication*, 1868; *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 1871; *The Expression of the Emotions*, etc., 1872. See *Life and Letters*, ed. by Francis Darwin, 1887; study by Poulton, *Darwin and the Theory of Natural Selection*, 1896.

corrected by a manifold desire for caution. He expects to find reality difficult and complex; he has never found it otherwise; and in a supple and patient way, his judgment has clung fast to the habits of things, so as to be moulded by them in the process. For twenty years he knew how to keep back an intuitive generalisation, allowing it to mature with time. Thus it is that his name has remained associated inseparably with a hypothesis which he was not the first to conceive, and for which he did not supply the formula which, to-day, is looked upon as the most satisfactory. Scrupulous and modest as he was, he did not, however, do full justice to his predecessors; and the theory of natural selection tends to become more and more subordinated to that of adaptation. The seeds which Lamarck sowed are more fruitful than his. Yet Darwin's wonderful sense of objectivity, together with the virtue of his intellectual example, leave him the honour of having won over the minds of his epoch to the new idea. In so shining a manner was he worthy of being trusted, that he made trust an obligation; and he made doubt a moral impossibility.

The Origin of Species opens to man a view of his past, and probably of his future, very different from that which had been current since ancient times. Darwin is fully aware of it; and yet his book, fraught with the emotion of great discoveries, is devoid of rhetorical effects, and even of every attempt at eloquence. He explains facts, discusses his views, and concludes with circumspection and simplicity. Despite the breadth of the theme, the poetry of imagination with which it is pregnant, and the anguish of the metaphysical curiosity which it encourages but does not satisfy, the sober flow of this prose hardly betrays the slightest tremor of emotion. There is no art here but honesty. This style is nevertheless attractive by virtue of the unfailing interest of the subject; and it shows a natural or acquired gift of clear expression. No matter how varied the aspects of the facts under examination, and how many the reserves and qualifications to be made, the progress of the demonstration, if at times slow, is never interrupted.

Darwin is not without knowing that his thesis—the variability of species, and their derivation by a continuous process of development from one or several elementary organisms—comes into conflict with the orthodox version of the history of the world.

But he does not seem to give the point much attention, beyond remarking that, if he modifies the accepted idea of Divine creation, his doctrine is compatible with another idea, and one which is not less acceptable to the thinking mind. All about him, however, the latent conflict was turning into an open fight, and his disciples were led to take an active part in it.

Spencer[1] stands in a pronounced contrast to Darwin. He is more of the philosopher than the scientist; or, at least, he is more attracted to the process of generalising than to the long and meticulous research which leads up to it. By training he is scientific and modern, and has, or wants to have, the outlook of a realist. But he displays a wide knowledge of physical or social reality, rather than a very full command of any special branch. He is more skilled in the handling of abstract ideas, and at the same time more able to adapt his thoughts to the embellishment of form. He has been charged with verbosity and pedantry; but the fault is to be found in the matter rather than in the style. He says what he wishes to say without any undue expense of language; and his lighter writings, as, for example, his articles on education, afford pleasant reading. His intellectual life was fertile and varied; despite an occasional stiffness, his was an animated mind; he should be ranked among writers.

If his work, and his fame, impress us to-day by their ambitious proportion and their subsequent collapse, it is because they were both built upon a hastily prepared and unstable foundation. The synthesis in which he incorporated all the known results in every branch of knowledge has not stood the further progress of specialised research, nor that of the general philosophy of the sciences.

[1] Herbert Spencer, born at Derby in 1820, of a lower middle-class family of Dissenters, was educated privately, and strongly attracted to science; followed for some time the profession of engineer, then wrote political articles (*The Proper Sphere of Government*, 1842). In *Social Statics* (1850) and *Principles of Psychology* (1855), the outlines of his general doctrine are easily discernible. Between 1855 and 1860 he drew up the plan of his system, of which the *First Principles* (published in 1862) forms the sketch. To the execution of the vast programme thus traced out he devoted a life of intense labour, in which he enjoyed the encouragement of a group of kindred minds. Success crowned his efforts, and finally he enjoyed a kind of sovereign fame as a philosopher both in England and abroad. [illegible] *Principles of Psychology* (1870-72), [illegible] *of Ethics* (1879-93), he published [illegible] *assification of the Sciences* (1864), [illegible] death in 1903 there appeared an *Autobiography* (1904). See Duncan, *Life and Letters of Spencer*, 1908, Thomson, *Spencer* (English Men of Science), 1906; H. Elliot, *Herbert Spencer*, 1917

The hope of being able to integrate the whole of knowledge in one single formula was decidedly premature. The attempt, however, was nobly inspired, and obeyed a legitimate craving of reflection. In its way the *First Principles* is a metaphysical poem, where the vastness of the imagination displayed retains in itself a kind of interest. The ingenuity called forth by such a task as that of moulding into one system the theory of the nebula, the law of gravitation, and that of the conservation of energy, lends to this great architectural fabric of ideas, however unsteady it may be, the beauty of the largest intellectual structures. And when human thought in its soaring flight reaches the threshold of the unknowable, Spencer checks its course with words not too unworthy of the majesty of the subject. However fortified he may be against doubt, even when he sets down in peremptory fashion an impassable limit to intuition, he is not without experiencing at times the thrill of the beyond.

The applications he has made of the theory of evolution to particular sciences, or of particular sciences to an evolutionary plan already traced out, are of very unequal value. There are in this imposing series some solid parts, which will be lasting. In his psychology, as in his ethics and his theory of social life, Spencer has mingled accurate and sharp observations, original inductions, with an excessive love of system. His theory of a psycho-physiological mechanism is too simple, and now out of date. He has not furnished, as he believed, a broader objective foundation for the moral doctrine of utility. But his effort to merge utilitarianism in the experience of an intuitive perception of duty, and to widen the field of human obligation from the primitive tribe to the comity of nations, perhaps opens the way to a system of ethics at once positive and idealistic. His unbending economic individualism, and his abhorrence of anything in the way of a developed collective organisation, seem to answer the demands of a temperament, or the fanaticism of a sect, rather than the serious lesson of facts. But when Spencer has ceased to be, even for his belated disciples, the Aristotle of modern times, he will retain the interest of a strong personality, broad enough to realise the necessary amalgamation of philosophy and science.

He was not only a clever user of other men's thoughts. His mind had been won by the principle of evolution before he came

to hear of Darwin. He borrowed copiously, and in every direction, but the materials of his borrowing were moulded as he wanted them. He has his place in the history of ideas.

Huxley,[1] no more than Spencer, can be regarded as a mere populariser of knowledge. He stands out as a person of originality, with strong features. While Darwin holds himself aloof from the struggle, and Spencer comes down from the heights of system to the things of actuality, Huxley, on the other hand, intimately associates science with daily life. The group of intellectuals, those thinkers with whom the passion for truth is an actual motive of conduct, find in him their leader. On more than one occasion he comes into open conflict with orthodox opinion. Although he does not shirk the fight, he is not a gratuitously aggressive writer. There is no superficiality in his clearness of thought; nor is his verve, at times teasing, ever indelicate. He has an intuitive sense of moral feelings; and while he accepts absolutely the doctrine of the close parallelism between the facts of consciousness and those of the nerve system, his horizon is not that of a narrow materialism. By making knowledge human, and by setting an example of a life full of generous activity, based upon principles which traditional prejudice had deemed pernicious, he has done more than any other to win for the scientific spirit its full and unqualified acceptance among men. A nation where the quality of character, and the social value of personality, count for much, did not grudge him a warm esteem; and this experience has left deep lasting traces.

He was, at first, before everything the apostle of transformation. By degrees, he raised an individual philosophy upon this basis. Like Spencer, he refuses to penetrate into the realms of the unknown, and in order to define his attitude he invents the missing word, "agnosticism." But to better purpose than Spencer, he preserves the critical freedom of his mind, and does not allow himself to become mentally imprisoned within the imagina-

[1] Thomas Henry Huxley, born in 1825 near London, was the son of a schoolmaster; studied medicine and became attached in the capacity of naturalist to a cruising expedition in the East. His first works on zoology attracted attention; in the front rank of those who associated themselves with the teaching and investigation of Darwinian theories, he played an active part in their diffusion, was looked upon as the leader [illegible]
of his day, and die[illegible]
writings: *Man's Pl*[illegible]
(9 vols.), 1894; *Sc*[illegible]
1900.

tive structure of evolutionism. His thought remains flexible enough to admit that if all outward evidence seems to reduce spirit to matter, at the same time all reflection reduces matter to spirit. His religion of truth, clashing with the doctrine of the Church, shapes itself as a form of irreligion. It retains, however, for anyone who probes it under the surface, the quality of a positive belief: It feeds on a sufficient fund of feeling, and is strongly enough bound up with the intuitive reasons for life, to stand the test both of practice and of moral health. Huxley has been, in more and other ways perhaps than he thought, one of the masters of modern faith.[1] To all the problems of conduct and of society he has, according to his lights, offered answers almost always instinct with a generous clear-sightedness.[2]

To be consulted: A. W. Benn, *History of English Rationalism in the XIXth Century*, 1906; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. xii. chaps. xiii. xiv.; vol. xiii. chap. xiv.; vol. iv. chaps. i. ii. viii.; M. L. Cazamian, *Le Roman et les Idées en Angleterre, L'Influence de la Science*, 1923; J. E. Courtney, *Freethinkers of the XIXth Century*, 1920; *Darwin's Life and Letters*, by his son, 1887; Duncan, *Life and Letters of H. Spencer*, 1908; O. Elton, *A Survey of English Literature, 1830-80*, 1920; Sir L. Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, vol. iii., 1900; V. F. Storr, *The Development of English Theology in the XIXth Century*, 1913, etc.; H. Walker, *The Literature of the Victorian Era*, 1910.

[1] With Spencer and Huxley must be named George Henry Lewes (1817-78), who sided with the disciples of Positivism (*Comte's Philosophy of the Positive Sciences*, 1853); wrote a life of Goethe which was for long a standard work (1855); then studied problems of various kinds in the realm of personal ideas (*Problems of Life and Mind*, etc., 3 series, 1874-79).

[2] Another interesting figure of the rationalist movement is that of Walter Bagehot (1826-77), political theorist, historian, economist and critic. In *Physics and Politics* (1872) he applied to human society the theory of evolution. *The English Constitution*, 1867; *Literary Studies*, 1879; *Biographical Studies*, 1880; *Economic Studies*, 1880.

CHAPTER III

THE IDEALISTIC REACTION

1. *Origin and Unity of the Movement.*—The tendencies of the Victorian age group themselves naturally round two axes; the main one being that traced out by the rationalistic and scientific movement, while the other, of almost equal importance, is to be found in the renascence of idealism. The latter, from the psychological point of view, is even more fertile in artistic expressions; from the purely literary standpoint it is the more important of the two. It is not so in the general mental activity of the time; intellectually, the epoch is more affected by the work of the first movement. The second, a necessary factor in the constitution itself of this age, interests a considerably smaller number of minds; it does not attract a larger number of eminent men; its influence does spread among the mass of average temperaments, but not to a greater degree, and perhaps even less, than the inverse movement. At bottom, it is not spontaneous, but derivative; it is first and foremost a reaction.

No doubt it can be very directly traced back to some origins at least in the preceding period. A vast association of emotional and imaginative tendencies, all inclined towards an intuitive philosophy and a kind of organic morality, it represents, as it were, an offshoot of Romanticism, whose inner impulse it prolongs and diversifies. The doctrine of Carlyle, the sentimental art of Dickens, the religious revival of Oxford, the æsthetic and social crusade of Ruskin, are one and all in psychological affinity with the most profound spiritual impulses which had produced the work of a Wordsworth, a Shelley and a Keats. New elements come to add themselves to these impulses, without altering their essential qualities. There is no real break, but rather an unseen transmission, and a virtual equivalence, between Blake and Ruskin.

The equivalence, however, is mainly virtual. Carlyle and his disciples are not aware that their idealism is a transposed variety

of Romantic mysticism. Blinded by the consciousness of conflicts on secondary points, Carlyle believes that he is, in his main purpose and effort, the enemy and destroyer of Romanticism. Newman and Ruskin seek their precursors not in the generation of yesterday, but in a distant past; and their faith finds its precedents in the Middle Ages. Dickens, on the other hand, is the thorough embodiment of his time, even when he sets out to criticise it; and he readily scoffs at what he considers the ridiculousness of a belated Romanticism. Nevertheless, all are stimulated to thought, to action, and to the affirmation of themselves, by one kind of spiritual suffering, in which the dominant note is the irritation of a discontented sensibility. It is against the spirit of their age—against the overwhelming progress of rationalism, of science, of industrial selfishness—that they meditate or glow with feeling, and that they write or speak. One cannot understand their attitudes without having surveyed at one glance the matter-of-fact civilisation which encircles them, forces itself upon them, and prompts them to revolt.

Under the varied expressions of their faith, the masters of Idealism, be it philosophical, humanitarian, religious, artistic or social in aim, obey the same instincts; the deepest roots of their individual beliefs intermingle; and the different aspects of reality which they denounce belong to a coherent whole. Behind the middle-class, reasonable soberness of life in the Victorian age, there does lurk one single counter-movement of ardours and enthusiasms.

2. *Idealism and Philosophy: Carlyle*.—Carlyle[1] proclaims,

[1] Thomas Carlyle, *son of a master stone-mason*, born in 1795 in the southwest of Scotland, studied at Edinburgh, planned to become a minister, then gave up the idea; was for a short time a schoolmaster, educating himself and learning German. He earned a living by doing drudge work for publishers, experienced an interval of depression and spiritual crisis (1821) which, however, established his belief. In 1826 he married Jane Welsh, and resided with her for six years in the solitude of Craigenputtock. Translated *Wilhelm Meister* (1824) and wrote a *Life of Schiller* (1825); corresponded with Goethe, and contributed several critical essays which attracted attention in the reviews (*Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, 4 vols., 1839). *Sartor Resartus* appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*, 1833-34; as a volume, Boston, 1836; London, 1838. In 1834 Carlyle settled in London, where he won fame by the success of his *French Revolution* (1837). From a course of lectures came *On Heroes and Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841). A social pamphlet, *Chartism* (1839), was followed by a treatise, *Past and Present* (1843), and a series of satires, *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850). In the meanwhile appeared *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* (1845). After the *Life of John Stirling* (1851) came in succession the volumes of *The History of Frederick II. of Prussia* (1858-65). The death of his wife in 1866 began the period of his old age, saddened by regrets and coloured by remorse. He prepared his own *Reminiscences*

with singular energy and authority, the place which he wishes to occupy in the moral history of his country. The historian of literature, just as the student of ideas, cannot do better than grant him this desire. While figuring as the apostle of instinct and the adversary of analysis, he has, it must be admitted, a clear enough comprehension of the struggle he is waging to be able to define it without the hesitation of uncertainty. After an anxious early youth, stirred by the cravings of the intelligence, greedily desirous of the knowledge to be gleaned from books, and open to all the influences of pure science and reason, he tries to find himself, only to discover, at last, that he has become the bitter antagonist of what he had hitherto revered. His personality is moulded for life in the course of the crisis which brings about its sudden maturity. He rejects and condemns the lust of the understanding, which around him has seized upon an ever larger number of minds. Since his century is bound by unbreakable chains to this effort of the reasoning thinkers, he will, henceforth, be the enemy of his century.

This intuition of self is not an arbitrary creation. Carlyle discovers the deepest foundation of his personality, and rests upon it with a firmness which nothing will ever shake. In this way he resumes contact with all the heritage which ancestral experience has accumulated, with a temperament of soul whose wealth of dormant ideas he will now realise and cultivate. His Scottish heredity is mixed; in it contrary tendencies work side by side; a keen utilitarian finesse of thought, or shall we say logical disposition, is closely allied with a vague and pent-up mysticism. It is in the secular reserves of a latent Puritanism, as well as in a deeply spiritual sense of life, that Carlyle finds an untapped vein

(published in 1883), as well as the *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle* (published 1883); and in a loneliness as great as was his fame he passed away in 1881. *Works*, People's ed., 1874; ed. by Traill, 1901. *Sartor Resartus*, ed. by MacMechan, 1896; *French Revolution*, ed. by Rose, 1909; *Correspondence with Emerson*, ed. by Norton, 1883; *Correspondence with Goethe*, 1897; *Letters*, 1826-36, ed. 1888; *New Letters*, ed. by A. Carlyle, 1904; *Love Letters*, ed. by A. Carlyle, 1909. See Froude: *History of the First Forty Years*, etc., 1882; *Life in London*, 1884; biographies by Garnett (Great Writers), 1887; Nichol (English Men of Letters), 1892; Wilson (*Carlyle till Marriage*, 1923, followed by *Carlyle to the French Revolution*, 1924; *Carlyle on Cromwell and Others*, 1925; *Carlyle at His Zenith*, 1927, etc.); studies by Taine [illegible] Craig (*Making of Carlyle*), 1908; Barthélmy; E [illegible] Cazamian (*Carlyle*), 1913; Rowe (*Carlyle as* [illegible] (*Goethe en Angleterre*), 1920; Ralli (*Guide* [illegible] (*Thomas Carlyle*), 1925.

of rich ore, to be exploited for his literary work. No one has said better than Carlyle how much he owes to his father, his family and the education of his boyhood. These are his veritable lineage. The genius of German literature is the favourable influence that comes to stimulate a ripening originality, to quicken its consciousness of itself, and to supply it with assimilable ideas, thus enabling it to emerge and develop.

From the day when Carlyle fully recognised his spiritual vocation in the struggle against an intellectualism, the supreme example of which was to be found in eighteenth-century France, he took up his stand at the opposite pole of philosophy and practice; from now onwards he paid homage to the Germanic school of thought, which openly condemns the Latin fondness and the demand for lucidity. By so radical and decisive a choice, and one in which he reveals his true self, he violently broke up the complex psychological unity created by the spirit of conciliation in England; he forced his generation to face the mixed nature of their tradition, calling upon them to cling stubbornly to one hereditary element only, to retrench and to sacrifice the rest. Such is the meaning of the war that he waged. He did not become the apostle of another country's suggestion; but it was the magnetism of German thought which helped him to polarise very definitely the instincts of his nature.

His general theory of the world is full of influences from the same source. Many are his borrowings from Herder, Fichte, Schelling and Novalis, as from J. P. Richter and Goethe. *Sartor Resartus* is an ebullition of ideas and images many of which bear the stamp of their Germanic origin; and the feverish zeal which animates this strange book is like an exaggerated form of the transcendental enthusiasm to which, according to popular imagination, the disciples of Kant were keyed up. But it matters little whether the theme of the "Clothes"—of universal symbolism—or that of the development and succession of forms, is derived from such or such a precise source. The passionate ardour which brings these themes into prominence wells up from the deep personality of Carlyle himself. It is the spirit of biblical prophecy, the exaltation of the Puritan apocalypse, that fire the fervour of this philosophic poet who represents, one might say, the fusion of a metaphysical idealism with the burning faith of an Ezekiel.

Sartor Resartus is a veritable storehouse of ideas, a centre

of germinating thought. The enigmatic figure of its hero affords Carlyle the opportunity to give us an autobiography in disguise. Here he resumes, stage by stage, and in striking fashion, the history of his soul's development, from egoistical disquietude and the morbid preoccupation of self, through the "everlasting no," to the certainty and affirmation of belief. The crisis through which he passes becomes thus the centre of a system of individual duties, which is extended very soon to embrace social relations. Modern society, in Carlyle's opinion, is diseased; and the Romanticists' malady of the soul, puerile doubt and pain, are the signs of that inner corruption. The Byronic age must be followed by that of Goethe; the teaching of *Wilhelm Meister*, interpreted by a conscience more Christian than Dionysiac, brings to the world the gospel of healing. Self-forgetfulness, renunciation, action, such are the laws which govern the psychological well-being of the soul. To each personality they bring a strong sense of organised unity, without which no vital success is possible. It is through them also that mankind as a whole will find the key to its rebirth. All human transformation springs from within. The outward garb of institutions, of practical activities, and manners, will be renovated by the effect of a spiritual rejuvenation.

Such are the main ideas round which the work of Carlyle develops; he gives them repeated and vehement expression; applies them to history, and to the conduct of nations. According to him, that mystic element which penetrates the reality of everyday life and which sustains it—the Divine effusion—is concentrated through a kind of superior intuition in the hearts of certain privileged beings; the guides, the pastors of the flock, are known by their sincerity, by the inexplicable assurance which constitutes their strength, by the success which crowns their stubborn will in the face of all obstacles, and which sanctions, as it were, the fact of their spontaneous adaptation to the wishes of the universe. Their "heroism" consists in an unbroken contact with the supernatural centre whence all knowledge and all incentive to action are diffused. The past history of mankind is fully permeated by the irradiation of those great inspired souls; they have left their stamp upon successive civilisations; and the one which is just beginning has as its legislators the modern heirs of priests and kings, the masters of thought, the men of letters.

There is no other philosophy of history. To Carlyle the French Revolution represents the end of a society whose soul is dead, the collapse of a vast organisation of deceptive appearances. This destruction, certainly necessary, brings with it no new principle of life; no hero appears who is strong enough to create, out of the denial of injustice, a new system of justice; and thus the logical course of liberated passions leads France from anarchy to chaos, even to the day when the desperate call for order, in itself creative because it is part of the permanent will of things, brings forward a Bonaparte, saviour and tyrant alike. On the contrary, a Cromwell and a Frederick II., the one emerging from religious revolt, the other from war, outlive the negative missions which they had to fulfil by force in each case, and thus come to display all their talent of intuitive constructiveness in the creation of a system of social discipline.

The war waged by supernaturally guided action against evil is everlasting; the Divine plan of the universe, in daily jeopardy, has to be each day readjusted. The century of mechanical invention has its special problems, of a not less grievous nature. To-day, the seat of the trouble is in society. Industry is a force for good, but blind to aught else than its own interests. It crushes humanity; it attracts and then disperses unceasingly whole masses of miserable beings; and the doctors of political economy see no other salvation than the still freer and more rapid working of its machinery. A doctrine of scholarly passiveness will not save society. The Chartist movement, the turbulent rise and oncoming tide of a suffering nation, obeys a cosmic rhythm; it carries within itself the principle of its legitimacy. It cannot be held back by any vain rational dogma. In order to restrain the riotous mob, one must appease the just passion which rouses it. An organisation of labour is indispensable. In it the imperious note shall be dominant, for order without authority is nonexistent; but it shall be well-intentioned and indulgent, and shall grant to the living tools that create wealth the sacred rights of human personalities; it will replace economic contracts by common accord between *man and his fellow*. And the model for all this will be found in the government of souls by the Church, as it was in the years of Mediævalism when the vigilant abbot was a temporal sovereign. A new aristocracy is growing in the per-

sons of the captains of industry; let them rise to the height of their task, for the future is in their hands.

Carlyle calls upon them and, at the same time, denounces them, because they will not heed him. The tone of his voice becomes more and more bitter with the middle years of the century. His prophetic countenance hardens in its irritation. He reproves everything of his epoch—the lies, the cowardice, the self-satisfied endeavours of a mean, half-hearted courage. Democracy, progress, the reign of mechanism, all whet his ire; Darwinism scandalises him. The life of society remains restless; the inner life is still being eaten into by doubt; and from the last rags of a worn-out Hebraism, a young faith, Christian and free, has not yet been strong enough to disengage itself. . . . Carlyle's last days are spent in an atmosphere of almost unrelieved sadness.

His work, however, had not been unfruitful. Carlyle could not see that it had contributed in restoring the vitality of his age; or if he saw, he could hardly find pleasure in such a success, *because the mediocrity of his age was odious to him. But he* had succeeded, despite everything, in infusing into a society threatened with decadence, the necessary psychological energy for its survival. He had evangelised a small élite, stimulated or dimly awakened a greater number of consciences; if England was recovering possession of herself, was attending to certain of her wounds, and had healed some unbearable dissensions, it was partly due to Carlyle's influence. The average tone of souls was now, to a perceptible degree, less relaxed; there was a clearer and firmer ring in the assertion of men's will. The determination not to die had learnt from him some of the secrets by which the threat of death is averted or retarded. It was not enough, however, for Carlyle; he would be satisfied with nothing less than the reign of a noble justice or virtue. But beneath and beyond his own thought, his most instinctive desire had indeed been that of national salvation; and, in this sense, he could have admitted that he had received his reward.

His moral influence is not spent. Still, his books no longer have new suggestions to offer. What constituted their fresh value has long since been absorbed, and the readers of to-day have ceased to seek them for the revelation of their wisdom. To

us they are works pulsating with eloquent appeal, illumined by an austere poetry, moving indeed; but their art bears the stamp of imperfection, because its originality is deeply coloured by obstinacy and capriciousness.

Carlyle's style is one of the most personal. In its sincerity, for it expresses a temperament, it is not devoid of a certain affectation; it testifies to a fondness for violent habits of mind and feeling. It is a style that has been moulded into shape by the maturing of his genius under the action of an exalted sense of prophecy, of a spiritual enthusiasm, and under the influence of an intimate contact with German thought. The language of his early years has balance and simplicity. With *Sartor Resartus*, a mystic philosopher and an impetuous writer jointly put in an appearance. Construction, the sense of proportion, the reciprocal affinities of words, vanish at the same time; an unquenchable ardour breaks in upon and destroys the calm connectedness of thought. The reader has the impression of some great stream of burning lava pouring forth, and bringing with it a vocabulary that is rough, abrupt, mixed, thoroughly saturated with Saxon intensity and concrete vividness. And this prose, when once solid, has the sharp edges, the breaks, the dislocated formations, of cooled volcanic rocks. In the order of powerfulness its effects are incomparable; but more winning are the rare occasions when its passion and its irony relax, and the evocation of the seer is softened by suggestion and dream.

As the thought of Carlyle is all made up of faith, of eager affirmation, or scathing criticism, his work is that of a poet, untrammelled by regular rhythm, or incapable of it, whose energy spends itself in vigorous, brief flights of expression. His imagination, however, the strongest of his faculties, lends unity in movement and in tone to his broader narratives and pictures. The inspiration which carries his *French Revolution* forward has the amplitude of epic grandeur. To Carlyle objectivity is impossible; he does not know what detachment from self means, nor does he possess the fine perception of the pure artist in souls. But in his sympathy he can thoroughly grasp the characters which harmonise with his own, and so re-create them. His portrait of Cromwell is admirable. He is great by virtue of his intuition. That divining power he possesses to search the past or the present, fallible and limited as it is, casts forth, when favoured

by spiritual grace, flashes of vivid light and even of beauty which are among the treasures of literature.

3. *Dickens and the Social Novel.*—(*a*) DICKENS.—There is not any injustice to Dickens [1] in going straight to the central feeling which gives life to his work; and that feeling is social. Through it he is linked up with a whole group of writers, and has a place in a great movement of the time.

No novelist before Dickens had treated the lower middle classes on such broad lines or in so frank a way. He studies them not as a detached, superior kind of observer, but as one on their own level; a sympathy, an immediate community of impressions, and, as it were, an instinctive fraternity, thus impregnate his study. Be the tone that of pathos or of humour, the mediocre lives on which he focuses his and our attention come, as if naturally, to acquire the dignity of art. Such is the permanent foundation of his realism. But below it, in the inner realms of consciousness, we feel the quivering image, the anguish of soul-debasing poverty. The unforgettable experience of his early youth—that humiliating phase of his life—becomes thus one of

[1] Charles Dickens, born at Portsmouth in 1812, the son of a small naval functionary, spent his early years in Kent and received an incomplete education; in London, where his father had been imprisoned for debts, he was employed in a blacking warehouse. After this period of struggle he passed some time in a secondary school, was apprenticed to a solicitor, then worked for various newspapers in the capacity of Parliamentary reporter or provincial correspondent. In 1833 he began his pen-pictures of life with *Sketches by Boz* (published in volume, 1836). The demand of a publisher for the text of a humorous collection of stories, to which illustrations were to be supplied, resulted in the series of the *Pickwick Papers* (published 1836-37). Their success was tremendous and placed him in the front rank of writers. He then published in monthly instalments *Oliver Twist* (1837-38), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39), *The Old Curiosity Shop, Barnaby Rudge* (1840-41). A voyage to the United States supplied him with *American Notes* (1842), and also inspired his *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44). In 1843-48 appeared the *Christmas Books* (*A Christmas Carol*, etc); then *Dombey and Son* (1847-48), *David Copperfield* (1849-50), *Bleak House* (1852-53), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1857-58), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1860-61), *Our Mutual Friend* (1864). He died in June, 1870, leaving the incomplete novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870). He had given many public readings in England and in America (1858-68); edited periodicals (*Household Words, All the Year Round*); written for the stage, published *Pictures from Italy* (1846), *A Child's History of England* (1852-54), etc. *Works*, Gadshill ed, 1897, etc.; Bibliographical ed., 1902; Imperial ed., 1902, etc. *Letters*, 3 vols., 1880-81 See the critical biographies by Forster, 1872-74; Ward (English Men of Letters), 1882; Marzials (Great Writers), 1887; P. Fitzgerald, 1905; Chesterton, 1906, Langton (*Childhood of Dickens*), 1912; studies by Harrison (*Dickens's Place in Literature*), 1894; Gissing (*Charle* [illegible] Cazamian (*Roman social en Angleterre*), 1903 [illegible] Barlow (*Genius of Dickens*), 1909; W. [illegible] 1922, Delattre (*Les Cent chefs-d'œuvre étr* [illegible] 1927.

the decisive elements in the formation of his personality. Even when those hardships had been left behind, Dickens could never forget them. It was this dim memory, at the secret core of his very life-success, that continued to sustain the energy of his effort to secure his material independence against all risks. It helped to intensify as well the multiple suggestion of active charity which made Dickens an apostle, and turned his work into a gospel of humanitarianism.

Considered from this point of view, Dickens has his place in the Idealistic reaction. His influence combined itself with that of Carlyle, whose authority as a teacher he accepted or felt. But his most important significance is not that he shared in the philanthropic crusade, that he showed up abuses, or prepared those fits of moral compunction from which reforms have sprung. Despite the practical benefits which did accrue from such a task, it cannot be said that Dickens was always happily inspired in this direction;[1] indeed, his art suffered from the bitter or strained mood which usually goes with a thesis of denunciation. Above all, he has stimulated the national sensibility which was slowly wasting away in the dry atmosphere of a utilitarian age; he has re-established balance and a more wholesome order in the proportionate values of the motives of life. This psychological action is brought to its most precise and most effectual pitch in his impassioned attack on the frame of mind which supports the individualistic theory of the economists. And here the criticism of the novelist succeeds in shaking the moral foundations of a doctrine. Dickens has contributed to the salutary weakening of dogmatic egoism. On this point, his teaching comes into line with that of Carlyle and Ruskin; he takes up his stand with the prophets of sentiment against the harder advocates of rationalism. In other respects, his temperament holds him aloof from their mystic exaltation. He retains a firm hold on reality; and never loses the sense of the average conditions which all useful activities must fulfil. An ardent believer in progress, moderate in his views and of an optimistic turn of mind, he lives and

[1] He denounced the "new Poor-Law" and the "workhouse" system; the rigours of the penal code as of the penitentiary system; the slowness of justice; the neglect of children; the carelessness and cruelty of a great number of private-school masters; the harsh laws for the protection of game; the bad state of sanitation in the poorer quarters of cities; the parallel excesses of the workers' unions and of the egoism of employers; the economic doctrine of "laisser-faire" and the social indifference which had been set up as a principle, etc.

thinks in complete accord with the middle-class opinions of his day.

And this middle class for Dickens is that of London, of the ancient cities and the agricultural districts of the South. He knows nothing about the feverish existence of the working classes in the Midlands and in the North, or if he does, his knowledge is very imperfect. The problems he touches upon in the course of his novels do not concern the industrial crowds which had recently developed, but rather a class of long standing, with settled and traditional characteristics. Instead of bringing us into direct contact with the epoch of machinery, and the new world, he leads us back towards the past. While his intentions are anything but reactionary, his instinctive preferences tend in this direction. The customs and habits he describes most readily savour somewhat of the archaic; only rarely does he venture beyond the field of observation which he had viewed in his youth. The joviality, the cordiality he depicts or teaches are those of a society that is still patriarchal, and that has been just perceptibly altered, but not invaded and upset by modern life. Railways will never be anything else than a sensational wonder for Dickens; it is by the tinkling of stagecoach bells that his imagination is wakened into spontaneous play.

Just as the background in his novels dates from 1825 or 1830, and underneath the symptoms of a changing age tends to link up with the eighteenth century, so his inner nature, attuned to the spirit of an animated, picturesque and familiar life, finds itself in harmony with a fairly average and a permanent type of the English temperament. Dickens appealed to the very heart of England, and she recognised herself in his pages, because he offered her a picture of herself which she loved to see; he showed her an England at her best. In a nation of very mixed tendencies —like every other nation in this respect—he singles out the features of genial humanity, and organises them into a whole; the author himself assumes, and often gives to his characters, an expression of sympathy, the smile of humour and the cheeriness of a kind heart. This composite portrait, in which not only Mr. Pickwick but many others have their shares, has the value of a synthetic image; the moral preferences of Dickens enter into every one of its lineaments. These preferences comprise, with a warm expansiveness of heart, a liking for the peculiarities of

character, and almost a taste for eccentric oddities; a realism both psychological and descriptive, without system of rigour, which springs from a lively sense of buoyant curiosity, full of an instinctive trust in life. Thus it was that the very great success of Dickens's work had the efficacy of a deep influence; that his novels told in favour of solidarity, against the egoistic spirit of the age; and that his popularity, which waned for a time after his death, has now again come into its own, and no limit can be set to its duration.

Dickens wrote rapidly. His strenuous energy was not always a substitute for careful art. His faults in taste and in style, the failings of his intuitive verve, are obvious; his literary individuality lacks polish. He sacrifices balance for the sake of intense effects; his expression obeys monotonous habits; he repeats himself to excess. His pathos is cheap or exaggerated; his imagination in its continual effort to emphasise the character of things tends rather to distort them; his vision, fond of agitated outlines, is apt to lose the very sense of repose. There is working, at the very core of his genius, a persistent spirit of Romanticism, which subordinates the actual truth, like the soberness, of every feature, to emotional or picturesque values; his realism is stirred by a feverish force of hallucination. And throughout the whole of his work, the effusion and the expression of self disturb or contradict the relative objectivity, without which there could be no novel of real life. At every turn in his stories, we come upon the favourable or unfavourable opinions of the author—a kind of sentimental commentary on his own work; and these instances of bias, intensified by polemical preferences and arguments, too often bore or annoy the reader.

Those blemishes which the contemporaries of Dickens found it easy to tolerate, while the succeeding generation censured them severely, are to-day seen in a more mellow perspective as connected with the sovereign gifts of an inspired artist. As a creator, Dickens is prodigious. The picture he has painted of the social world is one of the richest in the range of literature. His perception of things and of character is remarkable for its direct keenness and fresh vigour; while not unlimited in scope, it is, nevertheless, very wide; coloured as it is by the writer's personality, it possesses the quality of an incomparable liveliness. There is nothing scientific about it, nor does it seek to be so. It



Illustration by George Cruikshank to Dicken's "Oliver Twist"

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takes from reality only what interests it; and as the needs which it obeys are those of emotion and humour, the real is organised into a show of varied interest, always intense in effect, and of a tone either dramatic or facetious. Into this world no one can penetrate unless he has bowed to the artist's will; but such is the power of his charm that our critical faculty is disarmed. Few are the readers wholly proof against the spell.

At the first glance, our eye is caught by the swarming host of human figures. Over the vast fresco of his work, Dickens has thrown them in plenty; they give to every part the pulsation of life itself. Still, their quality is far from equal. The writer has not created them through one and the same intuition of their original beings; he has not felt them all grow upon him with one and the same imperiousness. Their features may have been suggested from the outside by a caprice of the imagination, by a preconceived feeling, or by the demands of the plot; they may represent superficial or deductive intentions; instead of being nourished from the deeper personality of the novelist, they may be, as it were, engrafted upon more exterior elements—mere desires for antithesis or effect. Then it is that, being less directly connected with the very substance of their maker, they more closely resemble one or other of his features, and less closely resemble life. They bear the stamp of his caprice, of a bent in his mind, of some partiality in his outlook; and being devoid of any lineaments proper to themselves which might have played the part of an addition or a corrective, they are nothing but that impoverished expression of their creator's personality. There is in the work of Dickens a whole range of artificial creatures, arbitrarily drawn by his somewhat crude dramatic sense, by his hasty aversions, by his taste for drollery which often approaches caricature. And so it happens that his personages have no other interest but what they may owe to satire, melodrama or farce.

But into the satire, pathos or farce many of his heroes infuse the superior virtue of an irresistible vitality. These bear a no less recognisable imprint of their origin; a Pickwick, a Sam Weller, a Jingle, a Micawber, a Peggotty, a Dick Swiveller, a Marchioness, quite as much as a David Copperfield, are members of one family, whose common father is easily divined; they all have something of his readily compassionate humanity, and some gleam of his humour. Nevertheless, they are themselves, and

develop according to their own principles. So extreme is their diversity that they exemplify in every respect the essential individuality of living beings. But they all have an irrefutability, a witchcraft in them; no one thinks of discussing them; they come forth, and we accept them; they possess the solidity, the volume of three-dimensional figures; the personality which supports them has transferred itself entirely into them, has shaped them out according to the mysterious instinct of all its powers. This creative process, identical with that which one can find in the masterpieces of the stage, is carried through with admirable abundance and variety. Yet here again we find many grades. The best of the personages are not usually those whom Dickens has studied most deliberately and consciously. It is not often that his traitors, heroes or heroines have quite as much flavour, as much vivaciousness, or irresistible truth, as the less prominent characters which he has dashed off with a freer hand. In the episodical parts of his work, his spontaneous verve very often joins an unforgettable vigour to the literal accuracy of the outlines. And it is here, perhaps, that his masterly skill is seen at its best.

What is true of the characters is also true of the action. The most elaborately worked-out plots, in Dickens, are not the most satisfactory. Where the thesis is stressed, as in the historical and in the purely social novels (*Barnaby Rudge, A Tale of Two Cities, Hard Times*), we feel that too rigid an intention is at work; and that effort towards a concentration on a single purpose makes the whole book somewhat strained. Dickens does not possess the gift of compact logical or artistic writing. The type of narrative which best suits his inventive genius savours very much of the old picaresque model; his favourite theme is that of life, a life which lasts, which renews itself, and which is born, as it were, of itself. In the opening chapters of *Pickwick Papers* the connecting thread is of the most slender; later, it gains strength, without allowing the reader to forget the purely comic purpose with which the book began; and a plot revolving round the biography of a central character (as in *Nicholas Nickleby, David Copperfield*) imparts a supple unity to the best novels. In his later work, Dickens endeavoured to brace up this rather lax construction; *Great Expectations* is a novel of a strong and sober texture, which takes a place apart from all the rest.

The profusion of his scenic settings answers to the abundance of his personages. The backgrounds are painted with an ample brush, and the lavishness of details breathes a kind of exhilaration. Description, with Dickens, is more than a means; very often it is an end in itself. It contributes to the general effect, but with such varied and powerful resources at its command that it subordinates the other elements of the narrative to itself. Thus the novel tends to become above all evocative; and imagination, the instrument of realism, carries the search for intense truth right to the domain of purely lyrical vision. The writer's senses are quick and keen; nature, the aspects of concrete life, the picturesqueness of things, eagerly absorbed, are transferred to his work in facile patches, not so much highly coloured as vibrating, astir with a nervous quiver of each contour. The material universe appears as made up of broken lines, pronounced gestures and rapid motions. Supremely suggestive, this art has its limitation in a certain instability, a kind of blinking exaggeration. The rhythm in the succession of images, with Dickens, often shows some slight morbidness.

In his calmer and less feverish spells of work, this gift of infusing with life all that appeals to the senses has the happiest results. He calls up before our eyes scene after scene of a truth made striking, and which yet our feeling of normal life is willing to accept: so accurately is the individual character of things thrown into relief, and so much realistic flavour is mixed up with the eloquence, the moving poetry, or the fanciful drollery, which are the main object and indeed the soul of the picture.

The reason is that the language which has to express both those emotions and those images is naturally rife with them. Dickens is a great writer by virtue of the spontaneity of his verve, and this with a minimum of art. His vocabulary has superabundant wealth; it wells up naturally and easily; all the inherent genius of the English race for concrete perception goes to nourish it. It carries with it, and turns to use, the contents of other veins of speech—learned words, technical terms; but the main inexhaustible stream is drawn from the fund of a racy, national, in no way particularised experience. The refining process of culture is less perceptible here than in the works of many other writers. Dickens, like Carlyle, has his touches of vulgarity—hardly perceptible, at once forgotten under the spell of his deli-

cately generous heart. The highest quality of his style i
movement; a movement which is at times strained and difficu
follow, but, in its uninterrupted onward flow, carries on the na
tion or dialogue without any fear of stagnating inertia. In
tain respects the conversations in Dickens's novels are unequall
the most familiar tones, those of artless comedy or of express
self-revelation, have in the mouths of his characters a frankne
an appropriateness reaching to perfection. On the other har
when the situation tends to be artificial, and the verve less spo
taneous, an unreal note is immediately perceptible in the dialogu
For the latter has no value in itself; Dickens does not seek to b
objective by system and rule; those among his personages wh
are replete with life have a voice of their own, just as they hav
an individual physiognomy; the others speak in a somewhat arti
ficial tone, which sounds like a thinly veiled echo of the writer's
own voice.

No analysis can grasp the essential originality of such a work;
its power of persuasion, which sweeps away our reserves, makes
us forgive all the faults of too insistent a method, of a senti-
mental search for pathos, of an excessive striving after comic
effects. Each of these weaknesses is compensated by merits of
greater importance. Everything considered, it is due to his talent
of sympathy, to his sense of the pitiful tragedy of daily life,
and to a rich vein of inventive comedy, that Dickens redeems all
his blemishes and keeps his place in the front rank. The *Christ-
mas Carol* is a pretty good example both of his faults and of his
charm; few have read it without feeling at times annoyed, and
much more often won over to the writer's will.

This art has a deep human quality. As its chief instruments
re tears and laughter, and above all the poignancy and flavour
f their fusion, Dickens is a prominent figure in the lineage of
umorists. His humour, that is to say, the temperament of his
action to the alternate aspects of life, is rich because it is
rmed of intense elements, his sensibility being keenly alive to
e moving significance as well as to the odd nature of things.
t this alone would not constitute humour, if it did not contain
principle of self-control, the faculty to dominate and to mix,
ording to the preferences of an intuitive art, the successive
nplementary impulses of his being. As a humorist, Dickens
menable to discipline, to a psychological duality, one side of

his mind watching the other. It is due to the presence of this salutary element that his art, threatened in other respects with a too definite Romanticism, acquires restraint, dignity, and the complexity of manifold planes, which, otherwise, it might have lacked.

Among the English novelists Dickens is neither the most consummate artist, nor the finest psychologist, nor the most accomplished realist, nor the most seductive of tale writers; but he is, probably, the most national, the most typical, and the greatest of them all.

In his own sphere, there is none in his time who can approach him. The novel of social inspiration, however, attracts the talents of original writers; from 1840 to 1850 this kind engrosses most of the vitality of English fiction.

(*b*) Disraeli, Mrs. Gaskell, Kingsley, the Brontës.—Although indebted to his father for certain precious advantages in the struggle for success to which he consecrated his career, Disraeli [1] can well be described as the sole maker of his own fame. He disarmed racial prejudice; and in the nation where the pride of aristocratic birth had remained most strongly rooted, this Jew—for such he was—although only separated by a generation from his foreign origin, as leader of the Conservative party came to impose his authority on the descendants of the most ancient English families. Such an extraordinary destiny as his represents the triumph of personality. Never has the writer, or the politician, been more decidedly inseparable from the man.

[1] Benjamin Disraeli, grandson of a Venetian Jew who had settled in England, and the son of a distinguished man of letters whose fortune brought him into contact with the aristocracy, was born in London in 1804; educated privately, he planned, while yet very young, a programme of political and literary ambition He [illegible] *Grey* (1826), *The Young Duke* (1831), *Contari*[illegible] *Tale of Alroy* (1833), *Henrietta Temple* (18[illegible] parodies. *Captain Popanilla* (1828), *The Infe*[illegible] several reverses he succeeded in entering Par[illegible]ng England" party with a doctrine, which he preached in three novels, [illegible] (1844), *Sybil* (1845), *Tancred* (1847); leader of the Opposition against Peel, he became Minister in 1852; grouping round him the Conservative party, he carried through the Reform Act of 1867, and as Prime Minister directed English politics (Congress of Berlin, 1878). Created Lord Beaconsfield, he died in 1881. His writings include two further novels, *Lothair* (1870) and *Endymion* (1880); a biography, *Lord George Bentinck* (1852); a political pamphlet, *Vindication of the English Constitution* (1835), etc. *Selected Speeches*, ed. by Kebbel, 1882. *Novels and Tales*, 11 vols., 1881. See biographies by Monypenny and Buckle, 1910-20; D. L. Murray, 1927; André Maurois, 1927, studies by Brandes, 1877 (English ed., 1880); Froude, 1890; Kebbel, 1888, Whibley, 1900; Cromer, 1912.

The most prominent feature with Disraeli is perhaps the suppleness of his nature. Thanks to a clearer faculty of perception, sharpened again by a more conscious apprenticeship, he singled out and definitely grasped the faculty of silent adaptation which was the core of English tradition; he mastered it, and, while assimilating, he deepened it; he rediscovered the claims of political empiricism, and, taking up the heritage of Burke's doctrine, appeared as his successor. But he could not have so efficiently continued it, unless his temperament had been attuned to it. His oriental sense of craftiness and opportunism infused a genuine sincerity into his communion with the ancient wisdom of the British instinct. And his imagination naturally clothed that wisdom with grandeur and with poetry. He could exalt the prestige of the monarchy and the pomp of the Empire, because he was deeply aware that the world is ruled by imagery; and because this England, which held the East in sway, took his mind back to the very cradle of his thought.

One must not charge him, therefore, with those semi-deceits by which the utilitarian sense of a thinker decides his beliefs. One must not even trace the copiousness, the variety of his work, the conscious effects of his style, exclusively to literary artifice. He has written in accordance with the law of his being. But there remains in the exuberance or the fluency of his language something which betrays too great a command of verbal ingenuity, the somewhat showy display of a national quality of little depth; a lustre on blossom and fruit through which another sap reveals itself, below the discipline of grafting and cultivation. And if with him conviction is not easily distinguishable from paradox, it is possibly because his versatile mind had often passed from the one to the other, and had not any direct or exact sense of their difference.

His first novels are the tentative experiments, spirited, witty, cynical, or sometimes sentimental and conventional, of a talent in quest of its true vein. All the influences of his time are combined in them, together with a remarkable intuition of the future. The traces of Romanticism are still to be found; history furnishes the framework of more than one story; the picture of fashionable life gives itself ample scope, whether in a spirit of complacency, or of liveliness and satire. To these already familiar elements are added more original themes, political allusions and discus-

sions; and one book, at least, testifies to a mind open to the *entirely new attraction of German literature (Contarini Fleming).* Below this surface of dilettantism, however, one can discern in all his writings the earnestness of an intellectual ambition; and an active interest in the realities of human existence, which must, some day, come to grips with the present-day problems of life. Disraeli is searching for a faith; and already in more than one pamphlet he sketches out the doctrine of national regeneration which is shaping itself in his mind (*Vindication of the English Constitution*, etc.).

After 1840 the interest taken by writers in social problems is stimulated by the consciousness that a decisive crisis is at hand, and that an unbearable degree of poverty is endangering public order; the novel with a purpose becomes more daring, and quite openly grapples with the fundamental problems at issue. This is the literary medium chosen by Disraeli to disseminate the ideas of a programme which he has now definitely drawn up, that of "Young England." *Coningsby* and *Sybil* in succession explain its political and economic sides. The cause of the trouble is the individualism of a society where all the organic bonds which used to support the national unity are now broken. A Whig aristocracy, egoistic and devoid of any traditional sentiment; an energetic middle class, solely absorbed in the pursuit of wealth; men of reason, cold-blooded sophists, deceiving theorists, the economists, the Utilitarians, have destroyed the vital harmony which imparted its health to the British body politic. They have divided class from class, individual from individual. Left to itself, industry has crushed beneath its unyielding mechanism a defenceless humanity; and the natural forces of counter-action which ought to have imposed a limit to its unchecked play—the authority of the sovereign, the public spirit of a nobility rooted on the soil—both failed at the hour of need. What is required is that in religion, obedience, charity, in the generous emotions of veneration and respect, there should be revived again the system of feudal equality among vassals before their suzerain, the mediæval liberty of the subject in his relation to his prince and his father. The Church, endowed with the spiritual power, will play her part in this general accord, which will re-establish justice through love. The lot of the peasant will be happy, if the castle watches over the interests of the cottage; the factory, that new,

unstable force, will integrate itself in the order which it has long been disturbing, as soon as its proper place within it is recognised, and instead of upsetting will thenceforth vitalise it; and presiding over a salutary hierarchy of rights, all of which will be justified by correlative duties, the Church and the Throne will jointly exercise a vigilant control over all souls. This gospel, which owes much to the teaching of Carlyle, ends in a kind of fanciful mysticism; *Tancred* quite openly holds out to the troubled, diseased West the vision of the land where the source of inspiration never runs dry, the Holy East, and the Asia of the Prophets.

Disraeli was never again to write anything of so rich a substance, or of a significance that would remain so fresh. Those books, saturated with didactic intentions, soaked through and through with self-interested motives, are artistically of most unequal merit. Their very realism, often solid as it is and based on documents, derives an unreal colouring from the fanciful elements with which it is mixed; the characters have hardly any other life than what they may owe to the symbolism of their actions, or to the meaning of their words; the plots are strange, and yet not unforeseen; an ardour, an animation of mind and verve are constantly rising almost to eloquence and pathos, without ever reaching them. But the forcefulness of the imagination calls up pictures of impressive breadth and colouring; the intellectual display is dazzling; the descriptions of life and manners, although artificial when invented or merely deduced, are strikingly true when the writer draws from his store of familiar observation. And the political intelligence which analyses the troubles of the century shows remarkable penetration. Disraeli has foreseen all the successive forms of modern imperialism; he has deduced all the consequences of an anti-rational principle in politics, and more thoroughly than Burke, has laid down the laws of a government of men founded on illusion and instinct.

The quiet but attractive originality of Mrs. Gaskell [1] among

[1] Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson, born at Chelsea in 1810, married in 1832 the Rev. W. Gaskell, a Unitarian minister of Manchester, and studied the industrial life of that city. After several excursions in literature, she drew from her experience the matter for a novel, *Mary Barton* (1848); published anonymously, the work had a great success. She collaborated with Dickens in his reviews (*Household Words*, etc.), to which she contributed short stories and a novel of provincial life, *Cranford* (1853); returned to the problem novel in *Ruth* (1853) and *North and South* (1855). Her last works were of a different character: *The Life of*

the social novelists of her time, lies in her combining, better than any other, a manifest purpose with a descriptive realism that knows how to remain supple and free. Her teaching is entirely spontaneous; it voices the immediate reaction of a sensibility in contact with the facts; the range of her books is none other than that of her personal experience; and as she never ventures beyond what she knows intimately, her pictures are true at the same time as they are eloquent. When she portrays industrial conflicts (as in *Mary Barton*), or the contrast between the kindly civilisation of the agricultural South, and the keen individualism of the North, with its feverish absorption in the progress of machinery (*North and South*), her pages have a virtue of human persuasion, and played a prominent part among the most active suggestions making for the solidarity which was from that time gradually recognised. Although her didactic purpose did not go beyond the duty of charity and mutual sympathy, she thus stressed the psychological—or the deepest—aspects of the reaction, already begun, against the dogma of economic egoism. But the value of her art is enhanced by its just and finely tempered quality. The manners, the characters, the language of her heroes, whether they are employers, or churchmen, or belong to the labouring class as land or manual workers, are of an order of truth still slightly idealised, but based on concrete observation, and quite close to the view of reality which one can expect from a woman's frank, tender and yet penetrating glance.

The same delicately tempered perception, the same tactful handling of the finer shades of expression, also give their value to the works where her realism, escaping the riddle of social problems, devotes itself to the study of personality and environment for the sake of their picturesque variety only. Her attempts at coping with dramatic situations, or her explicit defence of some cause, as her plea against the stigma that attaches to a seduced woman (*Ruth*), are not equally felicitous; it is here, perhaps, that her art finds its limitation; or at least, that the taste of many readers has fixed it. On the contrary,

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Charlotte Brontë (1857), *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863), *Wives and Daughters* (incomplete; 1866-67). She died in 1866 Her short stories form several volumes in the collection of her complete works (Knutsford ed., ed. by A. W. Ward, 1906) See Montégut, *Ecriv. mod. d'Angleterre*, 1899, Ward, Introduction to the Knutsford ed., 1906; Cazamian, *Roman Social*, 1903; M. A. Bald, *Women Writers of the XIXth Century*, 1923.

retains at heart its secret fever, and never succeeds in reaching a state of serenity. Whereas a Tennyson disciplines his passion and curbs it to a search after perfect form, Kingsley with his facile but uncertain talent, his inability to realise the exact task of the artist, only succeeds in producing second-rate work in the various branches of literature, towards which his disquietude of temperament prompts him to turn.

He has none the less given its most eloquent appeal to the social novel. *Yeast* and above all *Alton Locke* have lost nothing of the ardour of their revolt against the moral crime of indifference. These books possess the rare privilege, in the literature written by authors who are not actually social rebels, of genuinely expressing the bitter sentiment of injustice which is born of personal experience. They have thus imparted to thousands of readers something of the generosity of "Christian Socialism." This doctrine, in its English form, gathers and reconciles the various influences at work in those agitated years, when the spirit of democracy was fermenting, still in open opposition to the absolute régimes in force; the years when the hope of a juster order sprang from the climax of intolerable conditions in industry. The preaching of Kingsley is based upon the ideas of Carlyle. His theology is dependent upon that of Maurice[1] who taught that the Saviour's sacrifice having redeemed the flesh as well as the spirit, the scope of charity should not stop short of our neighbours' bodily welfare. The life of Kingsley had brought him into contact with poverty both in rural districts and in towns, but he was ignorant of the new meaning placed upon the word by the advent of machinery and concentrated production. His ideas apply only to the needs of the small workshop. To the French Co-operators he owes the principle of an active fraternity without which, he thinks, no society can continue to exist.

These themes are fully brought out in his two novels, where they are intermingled with scenes from life and pictures of manners, painted with a broad and strong, though hasty touch. In choosing the framework of the stories Kingsley does not depart from the traditional rules of precedence; despite his rather bitter radicalism, he shows respect for established moral authorities: that of the nobility, if it does not shirk its duties; that of the clergy, if it rises to the height of its task. Where he touches

[1] See above, chap. ii. sect. 4.

upon new ground is in those pages in which he fearlessly sets out to describe the decaying state of the country districts, the dark ignorance which enshrouds the Puritan lower middle class of the towns, the painful ugliness of the slums, the contagious vice, lawlessness and disease which radiate from them and are a menace to the happy and the rich; the slavery of the workers whom the sweater fattens upon. The destiny of Alton Locke, whose development was hindered by the inferiority of his birth, symbolises the cruellest aspect of social evil, the unequal chances of culture and full human development offered to the various classes.

The realism of Kingsley is pervaded by a powerful sensibility. Like that of Dickens, it does not seek a finely shaded truth, but soothes itself by extracting from all objects the silent meaning which lies beneath the surface, and which is tacitly repressed by convention. He wants to open our eyes, to make us feel; and the too forceful pressure thus exerted is the cause of the resistance which his interpretation of life, despite its vigour, ultimately awakens in the reader. The characters themselves are also the embodiment of demonstrative intentions, and are for the most part rather flimsily constructed. The lyricism on the other hand, whether it develops social themes and rouses the fear of smouldering rebellion, or pours itself forth with greater freedom in the joy of nature, of energy and of effort, has a sincere and attractive quality. In Kingsley we have a poet (he has composed verses of excellent rhythm and lilt), and a seer. He is more able to rise to heights of impassioned ardour than to show acuteness, depth or psychological penetration. However, he has a gift of humour, and to it he owes the happiest parts of his works.

After the years of his struggles, he lived to be a quiet man and an optimist. His imagination, still dominant, now gives itself play in calling up historical or legendary scenes; he still weights his novels with theses, but they deal now with less urgent and burning problems. What he seeks more than anything else in these last works is dramatic or epic effects. At the same time the natural sciences—the treasures of the animal and vegetable worlds—still stir to enthusiasm his soul athirst for wonder.

In the work of Charlotte Brontë [1] it is again Romanticism which is the animating force, but a Romanticism of individual

[1] Charlotte Brontë, the daughter of a curate of Irish extraction, was born at Bradford in 1816 and passed her youth in the industrial village of Haworth in

passion, similar to that of the previous generation. The novelty in the present case lies in the quality of the soul which thus shares its deeper secrets with the reader; and one might also trace it to the fact of the author's being a woman. The femininity of the writer explains the delicacy which intermingles with the ardour of sentiment in her studies of love, and the subtle essence of originality which is diffused through the substance of the emotions, and the very outlook upon life. The pure and yet outspoken confessions contained in her pages inaugurate in England that free revelation of sentiment which for three-quarters of a century is to be the special contribution of feminine literature to our knowledge of the heart.

Passion, as we have it in the novels of Charlotte Brontë, is transfused through and through with the moral austerity of a strong religious up-bringing; it is coloured by a stoicism yet sore from an experience in which hardly more than the painful side of human affection has been revealed. Under the stern discipline of such a trial, Charlotte Brontë turned instinctively and spontaneously to a self-expression that revealed her, no doubt, and the reserve of which restrained her effusiveness without checking it; but free from mere display, shorn of all ornament, and limited to a kind of sober realism. At the instance of the publishers, and in order to satisfy public taste, there were added certain dramatic elements of a somewhat artificial and morbid kind, to which *Jane Eyre* owes its least felicitous features, though not the least characteristic.

The other novels, less influenced by the search for violent

Yorkshire, in the midst of a bleak countryside. Intellectually precocious like her sisters, she wrote short stories and verses while yet in her school days; became a teacher, studied French in Brussels in the school of M. Héger, and formed a deep and romantic attachment for her tutor. This experience supplied her with the material for her first novel, *The Professor* (a posthumous publication in 1857). *Jane Eyre* (1847), which appeared under the pseudonym of Currer Bell, had a great success; in 1849 was published *Shirley*, and in 1853, *Villette* in the authoress's own name. Her life, which had been spent within the family circle, and had been overcast with much grief, found a short, happy respite in her marriage with Mr. Nicholls (1854). She died in 1855. In collaboration with her sisters she published the *collection of Poems* (1846), and left behind fragments, etc. Her sister Emily Jane (1814-48), a lonely, mysterious soul, died in her thirtieth year, shortly after the publication of a novel, *Wuthering Heights* (1847). *Complete Works of Charlotte Brontë and Her Sisters*, 1905, *Complete Works of Emily Brontë*, ed by Shorter, 1910; *Complete Poems of Charlotte Brontë;* idem *of Emily Brontë*, ed. by Shorter, etc., 1923. See the biographies by Mrs. Gaskell, 1857, Birrell (Great Writers), 1887; Shorter (*The Brontës, Life and Letters*), 1908; studies by Montégut (*Ecr. mod. d'Angl. i.*), 1885; Dimnet (*Les Sœurs Brontë*), 1910; M. A. Bald (*Women Writers of the XIXth Century*), 1923; A. Law, *Patrick Bramwell Brontë*, 1924; J. C. Wright, *The Story of the Brontës*, 1925.

emotions, develop round one central theme—the magnetism which subjugates the force of tenderness, be it humble or proud, in the love of woman, to the commanding radiance of a manly personality. This inevitable theme, in which we touch upon the secret of Charlotte Brontë's own life, leaves room for deft psychological analyses and shrewd descriptions. Pictures of everyday life, even scenes from social history—a school in Brussels towards 1840, Yorkshire at the time of the Luddite riots—add a concrete interest to *Villette* or *Shirley*. The spirit of these episodes is not always without its stings; Charlotte Brontë can handle irony at will; her satirical picture of society on the Continent is not free from some insular stiffness. Yet when all is said, these works with their restlessness are replete with a kind of sly fancy, a pleasing sprightliness of mind; but even the charm of their piquant observation is overshadowed by the great wave of impassioned lyricism which from time to time sweeps through their pages. The tumults of feverish, agitated or smothered feeling give them a throb of secret life and their appeal to our sympathies; just as an exalted eloquence, an enraptured imagination impart its most poetical quality to the prose of *Shirley*. But the same cannot be said of other parts of her work, where the language is more laboured, more timid than really artistic; it is clogged by incessant references to the abstract, and by a kind of persistent generalising. Her style is seen at its best when it has the courage to remain simple, and allows itself to be moulded by its own pure inspiration.

With the younger sister of Charlotte, Emily Brontë, we come upon a talent of stranger and perhaps rarer quality, whose first works are all we have before her premature death. There is no one after 1830 who so completely and boldly realises the ideal of independence in thought, and freedom in spiritual life, which the emancipation of Romanticism had set forth. In the cruel seclusion to which Fate and misfortune condemned her, she escapes from the trammels of daily life, and out of her solitary musings, in the heart of the wild moors, makes up the inner world of her mystic maidenhood. Her verse half reveals a conscious paganism, the revenge of pantheistic intuitions against the combined tyranny of society, family and religion. Only in the sad and rough, but pure and beautiful realms of Nature, did she find true consolation. Her powerful novel, *Wuthering*

Heights, where, unfortunately, it is impossible to reckon the exact contribution of her sister and her brother, is the work of an instinctive genius, that can divine the emotions of the most passionate souls. The figures which she has fashioned from the fabric of her dreams are worked out in wonderful relief, as if they had been borrowed from the most intimately known substance of reality. Her psychology, as naïve as it is profound, is at the same time wholly imaginary, and astonishingly convincing.

4. *Newman and the Oxford Movement.*—It would be out of place here to sum up the history of the Oxford movement. Its moral causes, its deeper significance, its connection with the whole of the Idealistic reaction, are all that we need to emphasise. The birth of the movement can be traced to an inner decision, whereby a certain temperament of soul sets up its particular needs and its preferences as the guiding principle of its spiritual beliefs. The type of mind that had been seeking its literary satisfaction in imaginative or mystical Romanticism, in the resuscitation of a mediæval past, in the return to national traditions, in the cult of emotions and forms which time had consecrated and exalted, would naturally find it impossible to live in the atmosphere of a cold, critical, dry religion, without feeling it acutely. After the Methodists and the Evangelicals had won over as many converts as possible from among the common run of lukewarm believers, the Anglican Church as a whole was still steeped in the torpor of the eighteenth century; at the same time the increasingly bolder attacks of free discussion were a menace to dogmatic tenets, whose holders seemed to have lost the courage to defend them. Political liberalism, with its patent hostility against the principle of the establishment and the privileges of the clergy, and rationalism in religion, a spirit stirred to activity by the German exponents of the higher criticism, were the perils which prompted new apostles to rise at Oxford. Their uprise was a direct consequence, through their stubborn opposition, of the progress of intellectualism, and of all the forces which were imprinting the stamp of a common-sense wisdom upon the incipient Victorian order. Their fervent enthusiasm is the beacon light of their endeavour. They have come, they say, to rejuvenate religion in the name of the Church, the centre of a spiritual radiance which is beyond all human guess.

Thus the Oxford movement is one among the several streams

of fervid philosophical or social thought which run through the dry, uninspiring expanse of that industrial age, and fertilise it. Its course is parallel with those of other streams, and it sometimes mixes with them. But it preserves its separate identity. Superficial differences often hide very positive analogies. The idealism of Carlyle, for example, does not recognise its kinship with that of Newman. Among the great social novelists, Disraeli is the only one who feels openly sympathetic with an apology for religious worship in all its pomp. Ruskin declares himself violently opposed to the Tractarians. Unlike other revivals of the past, that of the nineteenth century keeps a rather particularist and confined character; it does not penetrate to any great extent the psychological life of the day, nor does it colour the literature. But its subtle and distant influence can be felt at many points of the intellectual horizon, although one cannot often precisely distinguish what is due to it, and what is the outcome of neighbouring tendencies outside its range. Pre-Raphaelitism and the æsthetic renascence are sometimes working in conjunction with it; William Morris while at Oxford is an ardent Tractarian; Tennyson's poetry also is not without offering some trace of the attraction which the movement exerted over the imagination of the time. Novels such as those of Miss Yonge[1] and, later, of Shorthouse[2] reflect it to the full. And the most outstanding personality of the movement, both by virtue of his vigour of thought and by the quality of his expression, belongs undoubtedly to the literary history of those years.

With Newman[3] personality counts for everything. It

[1] 1823-1901: *The Heir of Redclyffe*, 1853.

[2] 1834-1903: *John Inglesant*, 1881. See Book VII. chap. iii. sect. 2.

[3] John Henry Newman, born in London in 1801, son of a banker and of a mother of French descent, studied at Oxford, took orders, wrote religious poems (*Lyra Apostolica*, 1834), and played an important part from the beginning in the movement which shook his University. He contributed twenty of the ninety *Tracts for the Times* (1840-41); resigned his position in the Anglican Church (1843), and became a convert to Roman Catholicism (1845). His *Sermons*, preached at Oxford, had been published in 1843; he published after his conversion, *Sermons, Addressed to Mixed Congregations*, 1849, and *Sermons on Various Occasions*, 1857, etc.; psychological or historical novels: *Loss and Gain*, 1848; *Callista*, 1856; doctrinal or polemical works: *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 1843; *Lectures on Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans*, 1850; *The Present Position of Catholics in England*, 1851; *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, 1864; *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, 1870; poems: *The Dream of Gerontius*, 1866; *Verses on Various Occasions*, 1868; critical and historical essays, etc. Raised to the cardinalate in 1870, he died in 1890. *Works*, 36 vols., 1868-81; *Letters . . . During His Life in the English Church*, ed. by Mozley, 1891. See the biographies or studies by Barry, 1904; Brémond, 1906; Delattre (*La Pensée de Newman*), 1919; Grappe,

envelops and contains the mystery of a decision upon which he centred his whole moral life. It is also the force which could make public opinion, in a people still susceptible of religious passion, tolerate an open defiance to old and stubborn prejudices. It exercised during his lifetime a charm, the spell of which his pages have not yet lost. It remains the very soul of his work.

Nothing is more deceitful than the illusory perspective created by the famous conversion of Newman, and the abnormal dramatic colouring with which popular imagination at once invested his person. A pronouncedly individual being, gifted with exceptional suppleness and intellectual sharpness, Newman is still upon the whole decidedly English. He possesses in the highest degree qualities which, undoubtedly, are not the most common to his race, but with which many others before him were also endowed; he does not, again, show certain traits very frequently recognisable in the modern British character, but which are not the most essential; yet his nature as a whole conforms to the general type. Below the grace and the delicate changeful shades, one feels the robust make of his character. His dialectic nimbleness, his shrewdness and at the same time his ardour, the simple self-effusion which so intimately mixes up his personality with his ideas, had all belonged to the English mind at the time of its Elizabethan youth; this temperament had been hardened, narrowed, bound with conventions and reserves, by the stress of social discipline, and under the withering influence of a degenerate classicism. Just as the Romanticists had infused new life into literature by going back to fountain-heads of national tradition and feeling, so the theologians of the Oxford movement refreshed religious life by a return to a vitality stored in the past. This was exactly what the Methodists had done in their sphere. But the reform introduced by Newman and Pusey is different; it is more refined, more intellectual, more academic, and its scope is more widely human. As a man of free intelligence and keen sensibility, Newman traverses a kind of moral drama which as it enacts itself stage by stage, in a conscience

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1902; Dimnet, 1906; Meynell (*Cardinal Newman*), 1907; B. Newman (*Cardinal Newman, a Biographical and Literary Study*), 1925; Thureau-Dangin (*La Renaissance catholique en Angleterre*), 1912; Waller and Burrow, 1906; Ward (*Life of Newman*), 1912. *Apologia*, ed. by Ward, 1913.

such as his, untrammelled by any secondary preoccupation, comes to have a very general significance and bearing. The emotion which that drama stirred in the public mind was due to a wide-spread realisation that a first-rate thinker had investigated, as far as was humanly possible, a problem of universal importance, and had put forward a solution at once courageous and frank.

Newman devoted several works to the definite support of this solution. First of all, he takes his standpoint on the ground of history; like so many of his compatriots, he is respectful of the claims of tradition. After having endeavoured to justify the Anglican compromise by representing it as a judicious mean between extreme errors, he must surrender to what becomes for him an urgent truth: that the continuity of Ordination claimed by the Church of England is not valid; and that with the Roman Catholic clergy alone lies the preservation and the transmission of this privilege of the Apostles. Henceforward he submits to the discipline of Rome, reconciling obedience and humility with a moral independence which remains the stamp of his origin; he does not, therefore, find a peace unalloyed with bitterness in his new creed; the needs of his nature do not harmonise easily with the atmosphere of a strange world, and his activities meet with many obstacles. He seeks consolation in writing lives of saints, or genuine novels, in which the fight which he had had to wage is told under the guise of fiction; or in directing attacks against the critical principle of Protestantism.

But the original contribution of his thought is a theory of religious belief. Already, when studying the development of the Christian doctrine, shortly before his conversion, he had brought forward a more organic idea of dogma than was current in his time. In his *Grammar of Assent* he propounds with much cogency, at a date when logical intellectualism is still in the ascendant, an intuitive notion of the inner reactions which prepare the way for belief: a delicate perception of numberless incommunicable shades, the valuation of which remains entirely subjective, and induces the heart to signify its assent, without any intervention of judgment in its well-defined modes. It was not by a blind instinct that Newman in the earliest stage of his career had been the adversary of "liberalism." Through the general weight and trend of all his work, he takes his place at the very centre of that reaction against the purely rational attitude of

mind, which as early as the middle years of the century was opening the way for the new mysticism of its last decades.

The psychologist in Newman is inseparable from the moralist and the preacher. It is his insight into consciousness that allows him either to throw light upon character, or to create persuasion. He has a delicate, almost feminine sense of the emotional undulations which accompany the clear-cut outline of an idea; this tact, which imparts their efficient quality to his fervour or his pathos, gives their value to his analyses, and the force of authority to his every word. The association of all these gifts explains the singular interest of his *Apologia*, the most widely read of his works; that confession in which the moving sincerity of the tone, and the reserve in the revelation of self, are welded into such a finely tempered whole.

The diction of Newman has strength, elegance and suppleness. He knows how to use irony, and his eloquence is by no means restricted in range; a brilliant polemist, capable of driving a nervous and pressing offensive, he shows a preference for the warm oratorical style; though his rhetoric never appears artificial, because of the ardour which sustains the spontaneous elevation of the language. His thought naturally moves at a quick, animated gait; he excels in explaining the conflicts of the heart or the most subtle theological discussions with nobility as well as with clearness. During the nineteenth century there has been no one in England, among believers, who has given so human a touch to the technicalities of religious problems, or made them more accessible to all.

Newman sums up in himself the literary brilliance of the Oxford movement. The other converts are somewhat lost in his radiant fame.[1] When the cleavage took place between the two unequal groups of thinkers—on one hand those who, in their disquietude of mind and eagerness for thoroughgoing beliefs, pushed their principles to the logical end, and followed them even into the fold of Roman Catholicism; on the other the advocates

[1] John Keble (1792-1866), a cleric, poet, theologian, inaugurated the Oxford movement in 1833 by a sermon on "National Apostasy." He published in 1827 a collection of religious verse, *The Christian Year*. Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-1882) was the outstanding figure among the Anglican ritualists William George Ward (1812-82) wrote *The Ideal of a Christian Church* (1844), and followed Newman in his conversion. Of the other Tractarians, the most noteworthy are Richard Hurrell Froude (1803-36), Frederick Oakeley (1802-80), and Isaac Williams (1802-65).

of compromise, who remained faithful to their Church, and brought influence to bear upon Anglicanism from within—it was clear that this outburst of zeal, and exaltation of religion, was really not so very different, in nature or in result, from those which previous centuries had witnessed. The Ritualist movement gradually renewed the ways of worship, and stimulated religious feeling, even in social circles very far removed from its original centre. In this respect its action must be regarded as a component force in the Neo-Romantic movement which developed after 1870, one element of which was to be a renascence of religious fervour, while another would inversely be the spread of moral anguish and of the suffering born of unbelief.

5. *The Æsthetic Revival: Ruskin.*—As soon as the new features of the Victorian age had fully developed, a revolt against ugliness grew to a head and found expression, in unison with the grievances of moral idealism, of humanitarian sensibility and of faith. The industrial age had founded itself on the cult of quantity. In the resulting civilisation, the religion of pure quality had no place. The craving for the beautiful in daily life was no less generally or cruelly thwarted than were the need of an inner nobleness or the longing for a heart at peace. No doubt, art and literature were honoured. But as measured by the scale of uncompromising instincts, the respect shown them was superficial, insincere or vain. For this respect did not permeate the whole of life; it was of no avail against the scandal, daily growing worse, of such vulgarity in the physical and intellectual character of things, of such starved expression on the surface of social life and the spiritual aspect of souls, that the artist's gaze would meet only with distressing sights, and he would find himself deprived of his indispensable nourishment.

Æsthetically considered, the features of society had always been mediocre; but this mediocrity was now set off and made worse by the material progress which was multiplying man's resources, and encouraging his hopes in every direction. In some respects even, it was not sufficient to say that the world was not becoming more beautiful, according to what seemed the fair expectation of a rational age; the fact had to be recognised that it was becoming uglier. The beauty of nature was being destroyed, and humanity degraded, by industry on a large scale. Stimulated by that painful experience, the desire for a better life

assumed the form of a regret; and all the beauty which the present was lacking shed its glory, by a natural reaction, over the past.

Romanticism had already known this impassioned return of imagination towards bygone ages. The artistic revival, no less closely than the other aspects of the Idealistic movement, was bound up with the Romantic inspiration, which to all intents was now becoming a spent force in the literary field, but whose secret energy was continuing and proclaiming itself. After the supple, fresh, poetic realism of Constable's landscapes, we must wait until after 1830 for the great riots of light and colour where the brush of Turner reveals the passion of his impressionist and even symbolist art; and painting, as in its turn, but at a later date, it passes through the very same phases as poetry, thus finds its Shelley after its Wordsworth. In their æsthetic theory and their deliberate worship of the beautiful, both Pre-Raphaelitism and the gospel of Ruskin are the vigorous offshoots of Romanticism, whose sap is their vitalising element.

But this sap had in itself the power of fertilising different germs, and the two branches of the movement underwent different growths. The beautiful may be chiefly perceived by us as a sensuous appeal, or as a call to our faculty of worship. According to the various temperaments and circumstances, the cult of art will tend towards a detached self-sufficing sensuality, or towards a spiritual religion. English literature from 1800 to 1830 had already illustrated these neighbouring tendencies, which are indeed so intimately bound up one with the other as to render separation scarcely possible. The work of Keats in its entirety breathes a rapture of the senses, a transport of soul, that finds its full satisfaction in the voluptuousness of nature, or in the entrancing imaginative aspects of the human world. That rapture had fed on the past of history or of legend. In the themes of antiquity or of the Middle Ages there was a very special force of suggestion; the modes of a former life were idealised by their very remoteness; they were looked upon as possessing either an incomparable wealth of beauty, or an attractive and picturesque simplicity, which one of refined taste must relish even more, because he would thus feel the supreme pleasure of obtaining partly through himself, and through his own effort, a gratification the more enjoyable for being more largely self-created.

The æstheticism of Keats was a first sketch of what, one generation later, becomes Pre-Raphaelitism. This doctrine bears the stamp of a more intellectual period, when art, more conscious of itself, works by principle, and will load its effects with subtle intentions. In it the rationalist atmosphere of the Victorian era pervades even the efforts of Sensibility and Imagination to escape from the tyranny of a Reason which has become too positive. Compared with the broad current of Romanticism, Pre-Raphaelitism thus seems to be little more than an impoverished stream, receding farther and farther from the fountain-heads of inspiration, and wasting itself in the sands of artifice or preciosity. It tends to condense, particularise and limit what was already the passionate quest of the Beautiful in its more intense forms, with a clearly marked preference for the archaic and the pure. It is a sect, and has its initiated adepts. The cardinal desire which animates it is frankly aimed at the past; it centres round the imitation of a certain spirit, as represented by a school of early painters. Its main focus is in the revival of art; but it exercises a very direct and close influence on literature. It allows one ideal to radiate through methods of expression similar though different. Its disciples find their leader in Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a painter and a poet. It is when dealing with poetry that the historian of literature must study Pre-Raphaelitism.[1]

To pass from this doctrine to the teaching of Ruskin[2] is to enter into a very different sphere of thought, in spite of many

[1] See further, chap. iv. sect. 4.

[2] John Ruskin, born in 1819 in London, the son of a merchant of Scottish extraction, was educated at home and then studied at Oxford, journeying on several occasions to the Continent. A lover of art and of the painting of Turner, he wrote to justify his tastes, and gradually built up a whole system of æsthetics: *Modern Painters*, etc., 5 vols., 1843-60; *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849; *The Stones of Venice*, 1851-53; *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, 1853; *Pre-Raphaelitism*, 1851. In *The Political Economy of Art*, 1857, and *The Two Paths*, 1859, his thought tends towards problems of a social order, which he openly discusses in *Unto This Last*, 1862, a book which ranks him among the intellectual rebels. An ardent critic of modern civilisation and the prophet of a spirit of regeneration, he published: *Munera Pulveris*, 1862; *Sesame and Lilies*, 1865 (published as a volume, 1872); *Ethics of the Dust*, 1866; *The Crown of Wild Olive*, 1866; *Time and Tide*, 1888. Elected Professor of Art at Oxford (1869-78 and from 1883 to 1884), he wrote a series of familiar letters for the artisan classes in England (*Fors Clavigera*, 1871-87); besides numerous essays, lectures, etc., he undertook an autobiography (*Præterita*, unfinished, 1885-1900), and died in 1900. *Works*, ed. by Cook and Wedderburn, 1903-12 (39 vols.). See the biographies and studies by Collingwood (1893); Hobson (1898); La Sizeranne (1897); Bardoux (1900); Mrs. Meynell (1900); Frederic Harrison (1902); L. Stephen (*Studies of a Biographer*, iii., 1902); Chevrillon (*La Pensée de Ruskin*, 1909); Benson (1911).

identical tenets and a margin of common sympathies. It is the Romanticism of the mystics and the moralists that revives here, not that of the lovers to whom sensual beauty means everything; it is the tradition of Blake and Wordsworth, not that of Keats. And just as English Romanticism was much more a spiritual religion than a merely sensuous intoxication, so the work of Ruskin is more robust and more broadly significant than that of his contemporaries, the Pre-Raphaelites; it draws its inspiration from deeper currents of British thought; it better expresses the permanent needs of its idealism.

Ruskin was mentally a self-made man, and his doctrine proceeds directly from instinct. From the first his susceptibility to emotion was very strong; nature, and such works of art as appeal to the soul, as stir up the poetic imagination or the feeling of religious sublimity, very early began raising in him his most moving impressions. His sense of a calling was at first that of an enthusiastic lover of art, only drawn to æsthetic theory by his desire to proselytise. The intensely suggestive landscapes of Turner, interpreted by a kind of noble mysticism of light, came as a revelation to Ruskin; he derived from them his theory of realism, which to him meant a passionate fidelity to the truth of vision; so that details must be respected and copied whenever attentive observation is an act of faith, a dutiful acknowledging of Providence, the recognition of the irreducible difference which exists between the individual wealth of concrete forms, and the relative poverty of forms evolved by reason; but details have no value in themselves, and a doctrine whereby art is tied down to a cold, cruel or mean precision is an error, the sure sign of a hidden corruption. Thus the principles of Ruskin can be explained only in the light of the Puritan influences which transfuse his whole being, and through which his logic is unconsciously refracted. By the various needs of his sensibility, the Pre-Raphaelite dogma of minute accuracy in details is reconciled with the cult of Turner, the most impetuously subjective of artists, and with a scornful condemnation of the most decidedly realistic schools.

The reason is that æsthetic activity is not an end in itself. Beauty is the flower-like expression of a Divine soul which lives in nature, and which gives to every being its form, the index to its function. The full development of this form corresponds

to the full exercise of the function; and thus beauty is the sign of an harmonious accord with the will of Providence. There exists, therefore, an inner bond linking up the happy blossoming of every creature with its physical and moral well-being; and as the human arts all imply the existence of collective relationships, it is the healthy vigour, or in other words the moral purity, of social groups, which supports the brilliance of the great artistic epochs. There are virtues behind the strong and faithful adaptations, the bold or shrewd inventions, which give all monuments their solidity, their sublimity or their elegance; and the seven lamps of architecture are essentially spiritual. The anonymous builders of the Gothic churches threw into their task a conscientiousness out of which grew the perfect workmanship of their handicraft; and the aspiration which sustains the pointed rise of the ogive, just like the naïve naturalism which adorns it with carved leaves and field flowers, owes its unequalled fecundity to the sincere fervour of a religious age.

And so the rock polished by the waters, the mountain with its load of forests and snow, and its murmur of many torrents, the crystal, the fern, and the face of man, all speak a symbolical language, which the artist interprets; the past history of the earth, the energies of matter and life, the promises of the spiritual future, are there disclosed to the seeing eye; to translate them into a more explicit language, is to create the beautiful.

And the history of societies gives the clue to that of the arts. In Venice an original civilisation is brought into being by the struggle against an unpromising nature, and by a daily heroism, pursued even when success and riches has been acheived. The profusion, the abounding joy of her stones enclose a wisdom, a truth, a moral balance; they are the hymn sung forth by a nation in the prosperity and in the faith of her youth; and it is no matter that an innocent paganism should mingle in them with Christianity, that these thanksgivings should be rendered to Heaven, which smiles upon the daring schemes of the republic, to the sea which bears its fleets afar, and to the sun which brings out the full beauty of its fresh colours. The architecture of the Doges' Palace is still uncorrupted. Is there not a faith in it, the childlike pure love of all God's creatures; and a suppleness, an elasticity, some irregularity? Everything Venetian, in later years, degenerates at the same time; and the style of the monuments,

the painters' touch, like the morals of the republic and its politics, all betray through affectation, through sombre colourings, and through the choice of sensual subjects, the inroads of vice and tyranny, the gradual loss of that inner spirit of joy—the influx of the divine grace without which no nation can hope to survive.

A mind roused by the meditation of the sacred laws which preside over the production of the beautiful, and which keep intact the power of creating it, was to shirk no issue that his apostolate might raise; the prophet of a social gospel was latent in the æsthetician. From the day when Ruskin realised that all the forces of material progress were driving the order of human life in the opposite direction to that decreed by God-inspired Nature, he rose against those forces, and alone in his generation waged war with them. His argument was more courageous than that of Carlyle; it took stock more widely of the economic facts of the day. By laying hold of the concrete aspects of social health, the artist came to perceive the positive data of the problem, which the moralist had overlooked because he transcended them with his keen metaphysical intuition. What was wanted so that mankind might be governed by healthful rhythms, out of which beauty in art and life might blossom of itself, was a justice, a charity, a simple dignity in the relationship of man with man, which the whole movement of modern times had tended to destroy, and from which it was daily receding farther. There was great truth, therefore, in Carlyle's saying that the soul of society was diseased; but the ugliness of an industrial world and the selfishness of the economic order went no less to prove it than the anarchy of the Parliamentary system. It was a question not only of authority being restored, but of its being actively and generously efficient; a bold and strenuous effort was necessary, so that the whole method of the production and of the distribution of wealth might be changed.

Thus was brought about the crusade in which Ruskin denounced the age of machinery, which made the workman a slave to the tool; the spirit of individualism, which justified a heartlessness reprobated alike by religious duty and by human feeling; the law of supply and demand, which fixed prices by pitting rival egoisms against each other. If there is no wealth but life, then all political economy is an abdication of human spirituality before the fact of animality. In other domains, mind

had conquered matter, or was locked with it in an eternal struggle through which it was itself refined; its duty, here as well, was to fight.

The plans for fundamental reform at which Ruskin tried his hand are inconsistent and vague. Laying stress at once on authority, the family and religion as practical ideals, they develop the organic principles of order and solidarity which he had laid down in common with Carlyle. In certain directions, where he attempted to obtain solutions that would be immediately put into practice, his effort to all appearances has not been less sterile; but his general intuitions possessed a fertility which experience has already placed beyond all doubt. The humanising of industry by the re-establishment of the small workshop, and by renouncing all over-elaborate forms of mechanism, may have remained a dream; it is an ideal which cannot be put aside; and in other ways, it seems as if the facts themselves were tending in its direction. The central faith which animates this doctrine is a powerful advocacy of citizenship through the cult of service; in this form, that faith has permeated practice in a measure which is as yet incomplete, but is still increasing. Ruskin takes his place beside Carlyle among the great regenerators of the conscience in a social sense, and of the national vitality itself.

His work thus had, and still has, an influence on the deeper resolves and the acts of a people, which exceeds the limits of mere literary popularity. Its artistic merit, as well, will assure its survival, despite the fact that its quality is not always equal or unexceptionable. Ruskin improved upon the example set by Landor, De Quincey, and the Romantic renovators of English prose; he still increased the range of its effects, by adding to harmony and animation the resources of the richest imagination and colouring. Always poetic, his style is not always in perfect taste; it shows at times oratorical cadences, a superabundant wealth of words, and superfluous ornaments. The impression of a too continuous and pressing eloquence, which it leaves with the reader, is bound up with the very sincerity of a zeal which is never half in earnest, whatever conviction it may adopt. This rhetoric, and this monotony, do not, however, take away their charm or their overpowering force from Ruskin's magnificent evocations, from his grand landscapes, transfused with the spirit of the highest pantheistic sublimity; nor even from his passages

of masterly analysis, with all their picturesque precision of touch, their energy in the handling of detail. On the other hand, an inherent diffuseness, an inability to develop his thought in a meditated and steady order, detract somewhat from the convincing value of the impassioned arguments in which the apostle pours his heart out. Through this exuberance of rhythmic and sonorous language there runs a more familiar, more spontaneous vein: that of some works, like the *Fors Clavigera*, where the artist, no longer strained, instead of exhausting his temperament, draws upon the accumulated energy of his passion and his faith, and most happily reconciles forcefulness with simplicity.

To be consulted: *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. xii. chap. xii; vol. xiii. chaps i, x., xi, xii; vol. xiv. chap. iii; Cazamian, *Roman social*, 1903; idem, *Modern England*, 1911; idem, *Carlyle*, 1913; Charpentier, *La Peinture anglaise* (no date); Chevrillon, *La Pensée de Ruskin*, 1909; Elton, *Survey of English Literature, 1830-80*, 1920; Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*, 1910-20; E. Neff, *Carlyle and Mill, Mystic and Utilitarian*, 1924; Ollard, *Short History of the Oxford Movement*, 1915; Thureau-Dangin, *Renaissance catholique en Angleterre*, 1912; Walker, *The Literature of the Victorian Era*, 1910.

CHAPTER IV

THE POETRY OF THE VICTORIAN ERA

1. *Principal Themes of Inspiration.*—The poetry of the Victorian age—that of the middle part of the century, between the first Romanticism which fills its beginning, and the second which precedes its end—is woven of the two main strands of thought and feeling which run through the central period; that poetry finds its proper perspective on the intricate, shifting background of their interplay. The inspiration of each individual poet can be described more precisely in relation to those broad lines of development.

Viewed as a whole, the display of poetic talent during these years is as prolific as it is subtly varied in the wide range of its colouring. One can, however, distinguish in it two groups of poets; they are not divided because of any well-defined antagonism—indeed, they are united by many intermediary shades; but one group rather seeks to identify itself with the contemporary movement in intellectual and critical thought, stressing the need for objectivity, and aiming at a standard of balance, based upon the quality of precision in each idea; while the other group seems to favour the idealistic reaction with its desire for emotion, its cult of beauty and its dreamy tendency, weaving the main themes of vision round the subtle blending of imagination and sensibility. From the point of view of general literary history, the first group logically precedes the second, explaining, so to speak, and determining its existence, just as action naturally precedes reaction. The Victorian age is above all characterised by an intellectual and positive movement. But poetry is not always the surest, nor the most minutely accurate symptom of the evolution of mind. Compared with other forms of art, it may show an appreciable backwardness; it is the privileged domain of conservative tendencies. In fact, the poets of the second group occupy a position of slight priority with relation to those of the first. A student who keeps chronology in mind will begin his examination with them.

The reason is that the idealistic reaction does not constitute an absolute beginning; in many respects it represents the natural, direct continuation of Romanticism. Neither in literature nor in the inner life of the soul can it be said that the properly Romantic inspiration is exhausted after 1830. It is seen in mixed forms, and combines with the other psychological elements which characterise the new period. There is scarcely a poet from now onwards who does not reveal, in some degree, the reciprocal penetration and fusion of the influences in conflict.

There is an element of Romanticism in all the Victorian poets. With many, this remains their strongest and most obvious characteristic. But the spiritual change that has taken place, and the atmosphere of a different age, give their art another aspect. The new features are either a more strongly disciplined manner, a more elaborate perfection of the form; or a more spontaneous sympathy with emotions which seem to exclude the Romantic obsession of self; or again, a stringent intellectualism which colours the highest flights of the imagination. In the same way, the poets who show most clearly in their work the decline of purely Romantic themes no doubt derive their inspiration from the restless activity of the mind; they are occupied with mere truth; philosophy and psychology appeal to them; their poems are analyses, demonstrations, into which one feels that science has instilled something of its method; their ideal lies, or seems to lie, in objectivity. But all their poetry is impregnated with a diffused Romanticism, which at times crystallises in words that seem to be but the echo of those of yesterday. In view, therefore, of the very varied and mixed tendencies at work, strict classification would be arbitrary. Writers and groups can be studied according to a certain order; but this order must remain pliant, avoid all system, and leave full scope to the study of individual temperaments.

2. *Tennyson.*—If the poets of the Victorian era had to be grouped round two central figures, one of these would be *Tennyson*[1] *and the other Browning.* Tradition has established this

[1] Alfred Tennyson, born in Lincolnshire in 1809, was the son of a pastor, and showed, at a very early age, a calling to poetry; already in 1827 he published, in conjunction with his two brothers, an anonymous collection of verse, *Poems by Two Brothers*; studied at Cambridge, published *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830) which, like the *Poems* of 1833, aroused no enthusiasm; but public taste turned slowly in his favour, and his *Poems* of 1842 placed him in the front rank. *The Princess* (1849), *In Memoriam* (1850) show the growth of his inspiration. Appointed Poet

parallel and, one might say, imposed it. To avoid it altogether would seem tempting; but it fits in too well with the main lines of the present study not to be adopted here.

Tennyson shares much more than his contemporary Browning in the direct prolongation of Romanticism. Not only do his early ventures show him to be imbued by the influence of his great predecessors, but he will never deny them. Even to the very close of his long career, his mental attitude will not cease to be characterised by a sensibility which reacts to the stimulus of things, and which takes itself for their measure. His poetry, even when it is dramatic, will always be, as with Hugo, the sonorous echo of his own soul. But, on the other hand, he follows the evolution of the century, adapting himself to the principal changes it brings with it, in a spirit that is neither too passive nor too stubborn. He is aware of all the new influences at work in the atmosphere of his epoch, some of which stimulate his moral convictions and prejudices, whilst others damp them. He feels the tremendous attraction of science and critical thought, and yields to it or, more often, fights against it, thus taking up, of necessity, the attitude of the abstract thinker. From the point of view of the animating force as well as of the essential intentions which shape his work, Tennyson must be classed with the supporters of intuitionalism, in the wake of Carlyle and Ruskin. He knows that his spiritualistic beliefs are menaced, and so he becomes their defender. He has a philosophy, therefore: that of an age when faith is the prize of victory, and remains open to obsessing doubts.

Laureate in 1850, he settled in the Isle of Wight, and spent the remainder of his days in happy, calm seclusion as a prince of literature. *Maud* (1855) had a varying success, that of the *Idylls of the King* (1859, '69, '89) was universal. Besides the publication of numerous poems (*Enoch Arden*, 1864; *Ballads*, 1880; *Tiresias*, 1885; *Demeter*, 1889; *The Death of Œnone*, 1892, etc.), he wrote dramas (*Harold*, 1877; *The Cup*, 1881; *Becket*, 1884, etc.), several of which were successfully performed. Raised to the peerage in 1884, he died in 1892, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. *Poems*, ed. by Hallam, Lord Tennyson, 9 vols., 1907-8; *In Memoriam*, ed. by Robinson, 1901; ed. by Percival, 1907; *Maud*, ed. by Wordsworth, 1899; *Idylls of the King*, ed. by Wheeler, 1913; *Enoch Arden*, ed. by Beljame, 1892; ed. by Marwick, 1914. See biography by Hallam, Lord Tennyson, 1897; studies by Waugh, 1893; Van Dyke, 1898; Lang (Modern English Writers), 1901; Lyall (English Men of Letters), 1902; Bradley (*Commentary on In Memoriam*), 1902; Benson (Little Biographies), 1904; Dhaleine (*A Study on Tennyson's Idylls of the King*), 1905; Lauvrière (*Repetition and Parallelism in Tennyson*), 1910; Lounsbury (*Life and Times of Tennyson*), 1915; Roz (*Grands écriv. étrang.*), 1911; Baker (*Concordance to Poetical and Dramatic Works*), 1914; Fausset, 1923; Nicolson, 1923.

He is not less a Victorian by the quality of his expression. While Romanticism had tended rather to lay stress on spontaneity of feeling, Tennyson deliberately emphasises the importance of discipline in form. He is an indefatigable, conscientious and meticulous artist. His poems after going through successive revisions are sometimes hardly recognisable, and almost always closer to perfection. He is aware of the fact that in this endeavour lies the principle of a fruitful departure; and that the preceding generation, however inspired it may have been, did not aim at the strictly condensed expression which could have contained the enthusiasm of its lyric outbursts. After the lapse of two centuries, he again experiences, next to an age of self-outpouring and passion, that need for balance, for a fine and compact aptness of phrase, which poets like Waller and Dryden had felt. As the heir of Romantic tradition, he completes and corrects it by incorporating with it the essential tenets of classicism.

But however much the moral needs behind his literary technique may resemble the opinions and preferences which, in classical times, inspired the taste for a sober type of beauty, Tennyson does not possess the instinct of sobriety; or rather, it does not dominate his art, but is continually assailed by contrary tendencies. He is a poet who has learned from the Romantics the sense and value of intensity; but the diffused memory of the last four centuries, with all their progressive enriching of the artistic mind, forbids him the perception or the intuition of an intenseness allied with a forceful simplicity; he hardly can be intense but by forcing upon vigour the touch of refinement. And thus intensity with him, through the very process of its realisation, is weakened. . . .

The art of Tennyson, which is, as it were, the flower brought forth by the slow growth of a national culture, while of a very pure and delicate quality, is not exempt from a slight touch of Alexandrinism; the savour of the artificial, the superiority of ornamental effects, of a highly finished form, of a fastidious exclusiveness, as against the originality of the thought, all introduce the subtle aroma of decadence into his poetry, supremely refined and impeccable as it is. Whole sections of his work are marred by this undue striving after style, which he vainly strains his almost unerring tact to hide, and which, with the lapse of time, already assumes the character of a mannerism. Other parts are

more relatively free from it, and it would be easy to exaggerat this superficial weakness. The reaction of our age against th age that went before has brought with it a disparagement of Ten nyson which is very probably too severe. His art retains a suf ficient sincerity of tone, it is supported by a sufficiently vigorous truth of feeling, to render acceptable the elaborate elegance of his style. His work as a whole will assuredly keep its appeal, and not be relegated to the class of writings with a refined but ephemeral brilliance.

His early poems show him to be a master in a facile, graceful and harmonious key, supple enough yet to try his hand in various ways, but lacking still the strength of personality necessary to allay the misgivings roused by his dazzling cleverness. In these first efforts he deals in word-painting and delightful harmonies; he shows exquisite feeling for the music of syllables and the charm of imagery. In some of the poems, one can feel suggestions from Shelley, Keats, or Coleridge. In others we catch the glow of a poetic impressionability, of a gift for visionary and mystical effects, revealing the innermost soul of a temperament that, beneath the outward show of a well-balanced art, strives to conceal the feverish agitation of an almost morbid mind. But a common feature of all the poems is that caressing music of the melody, that unerring felicity in the metrical translation of feelings, which are from the point of view of poetic style, if not from that of lyrical expression, a contribution worthy of the most talented artists.

The collection of pieces published by Tennyson in 1842 shows the poet in the full command of his first style. His inspiration finds vent in a rich blending of Romantic subjectivism with an objective interest in the changes wrought by time among men and ideas, a blend which represents the new spirit of a century of criticism and history. In his own way he is experiencing the almost universal desire to go beyond the limits of self, and so he borrows his themes from the present, from the Middle Ages, from classical antiquity, from legend or fancy as well as from reality. But his capacity of vicarious experience is limited; he revives only the emotions with which he can identify himself, and thus the personal note is always and everywhere in evidence. It is this personality which reduces the most opposite of tonalities, brilliant or subdued, to a sort of serene equality, and bathes them in the

calm of quiet thoughtfulness. It is also the force at work, transfusing every subject he treats of with a kind of inherent moral idealism; and this springs from the noble exaltation as well as the suppressed anguish of an inner eagerness, fed, even at this date, by experience, by meditation and suffering. The most outstanding traits in this early period of his art are the brilliant and, one might say, the chosen quality of the imagination, at once fresh, full of life, and rich rather than sensual or plastic; and the variety of the rhythms, which associate a masterly liberty in effects with an extreme severity in prosodic feeling. But at the same time the poet seeks to amplify his resources by tending towards symbolism. *The Lotos-Eaters, The Palace of Art, A Dream of Fair Women*, are not only masterpieces of musical and visual evocation. What they call forth in precise images is carried on through a whole series of mental potentialities, which do not really constitute a philosophy, but which have the actual power of an immaterial suggestion.

With *The Princess* and *In Memoriam* the poetry of Tennyson acquires the substance which it may have seemed to lack. The first of these poems introduces a serious idea in a way at once attractive and pleasing, though not a little over-sweet; the grave nature of the theme is often a disturbing element in the easy enjoyment of what is essentially a fantasy; and on the other hand the charm of the scenic descriptions tends to eclipse the rather fictitious dramatic action, borne up by characters who are too obviously the puppets of theory. And yet, the descriptive or emotional lyricism in the poem develops round the structure of a subject; the scenes or episodes, a trifle deficient in sustained energy, which the poet spontaneously produces, nevertheless group themselves into a whole where each supports the other. Several of the interludes are of rare and entrancing beauty.

It is difficult not to believe that the series of elegiac effusions (*In Memoriam*) which Tennyson matured for a long time, into which he poured the best of his thought, the deepest of his feelings, and the patient labour of seventeen years, is as well the summit of his endeavours. There are weak points in the poem—a certain monotony, a rhythmic plan which in its detail is astonishingly varied, but in its general outline somewhat too simple and regular, and the obviously unequal struggle, at times, with a baffling problem or a too precise formula; still, Tennyson has

found in his mourning for his friend an inspiration deep and diverse enough to lend itself to all the aspects of thought, to all the states of the soul, and give an inner unity to the one hundred and thirty-one paragraphs of a long philosophical monologue. The problem of immortality is treated in terms of life rather than of dialectic thought; with the interchange which it evokes between doubt and fear, dreams and reality, ardent desire and unswerving confidence, it is viewed in its various bearing on the events of daily life, on the change from season to season, on the broad displays of the physical world, on the troubles which assail the heart of man. The poet's grief goes through a series of stages, from the poignant pain which the memory of his friend's death recalls, through regret, and the anxious communion of the soul with an indifferent Nature, to a serene resignation. His outraged feeling finds solace in a broader love for mankind; and his intuitive conviction of a spiritual life after death gathers strength. *In Memoriam* reflects in every line the moral and religious conflict of the century in the aspect it assumed about 1850, and the poem will always bear the ineffaceable stamp of this date. Yet the thoughts therein expressed are deep enough to make the conflict not so much one of a particular epoch, as of all time; they voice universal emotions. It cannot be denied that in its more didactic passages the philosophical argument tends to be a crushing weight; but in the lines where the meditation flows of itself, as in the moments of earnest reverie, it contributes a note of sublimity and force which never fails in its persuasive appeal. And it is only the secret magic of great metaphysical anguish that can shed such heart-stirring light upon those landscapes of the soul.

Maud as a poem interests and pleases us by reason of the very traits which surprised the contemporaries of Tennyson: the more vigorous touches, the study of a morbid psychology, and the boldness of a lyricism which carries to a very high degree the fusion of spiritual life and Nature. The drama in itself, however, has no consistency; the conclusion is artificial; and if the masterly skill of the artist comes into full possession of all its resources, it is only to draw dangerously near to their abuse. The twenty-five years which followed the publication of *In Memoriam* are those in which Tennyson, having risen to eminent fame in his own lifetime, used to the full and with perfect clear-sighted-

ness all the means of seduction which he owed to his genius and to his experience. His greatest works no longer belong to this period. His technical skill as an artist had developed at the expense of his creative originality. *Enoch Arden* with its sentimentality and conventional colouring, and despite its supremely adroit nicety of phrase, has few admirers to-day. As for the *Idylls of the King*, intended by the poet to be his most spacious effort, they only remain a typical product of Victorian art. Here we have the triumph of an idealisation by principle which seeks for beauty in refinement, and which, to veil the crude elements of passion as well as the problems of thought, transposes them into an atmosphere of distant legendary lore. The choice of the episodes, the quality of the images, the hieratic attitude of the figures, the ecstatic simplicity of the outline, the restrained ardour of the feelings, the rich light as from a stained-glass window which suffuses the whole work, all suggest the contemporary painting of Rossetti and Burne-Jones. During this phase of his career Tennyson fell a victim to the fascination of the Pre-Raphaelite ideal, to which he had already been drawn by his partiality for precise detail and minute observation. By a sheer miracle he fulfilled his intention, and gave the cycle of tales, in which, round the magic name of Arthur, he wove symbolic and modern allegories, a genuine human interest, over and above the charm of a somewhat bloodless distinction. Some of his characters are living, and it must be admitted that the touch of the writer, the artist or the musician in language, has never been more exquisite. But at the same time one cannot forget the essential artificiality of this imaginative epic, at once mystical and moralising. It destroys the original character which the poetic instinct of generation after generation had given those legends, and in its place substitutes the languorous suavity of a conventional age.

It is surprising to note that in the last period of his work Tennyson returns to inspirations of a simpler nature. There is something of a more direct appeal in the poems he wrote after 1875, although they are less delightfully attractive. Once again he takes up the ancient and classical, or idyllic and English, themes of his first collections, and treats them in a sober style which often reaches to virility. At the same time the feeling in them shows a tendency towards sadness. *Locksley Hall Sixty*

Years After is the singularly frank confession, too impassioned perhaps not to be a little jarring, of the bitterness which the aged poet experienced as he saw the closing century threatened with an inner decay. Yet until his death the marvellous gifts his nature was endowed with did not fail to create the same beautiful images, or to compose the same delicate and suggestive harmonies; the accurate sense of his musical instinct never belied itself.

His work, however, has other aspects still: the humorous sketches, the poems written in a peasant vein, whose language is mixed with dialect; the occasional pieces in which the Poet Laureate gives national pride some of its highest expressions; the dramas, of which several still are staged: highly polished works these, devoid of any deep dramatic life, but not destitute of merit in their pathos and psychology, and showing a moral quality which is never otherwise than noble.

To sum up, the impression left by Tennyson is more substantial and varied than the reader might be led to expect from the impoverished stylisation of his genius, which the poet himself no doubt was responsible for and encouraged, but of which he has been the victim. As the finest example of a culture that is too wise, too scrupulous and conscientious, to countenance any imprudence on the part of the artistic imagination—even that imprudence which is a condition of the most fruitful endeavours—Tennyson is still near enough to the elementary forces of Romanticism, to retain much of their creative energy; and the delicacy of his taste so genuinely reflects the purity of his spiritualised nature, that he runs no risk of enervating poetry, while idealising it. He has in him strains of passion, of disquietude, as well as germs of instability; and they undoubtedly appear through the outer polish of his art as a contradiction. But if the substance of his work is thus less homogeneous, on the other hand the writer becomes more human and more true to life. Tennyson pre-eminently represents Victorian literature, a privilege which to-day is in the eyes of many one of his shortcomings; the time will come, no doubt, when impartial criticism will judge him not as the greatest poet, but as the most admirable artist of the nineteenth century in England, inferior only in this respect to what Keats gave promise of, and at rare moments came to achieve.

One can count all the more firmly on a reaction of public opinion in his favour, as the vein of his genius is distinctly national, and he has voiced better than any other the instincts, feelings and preferences which have never ceased to feed the moral personality of the English people. One thing alone might detract from the value of this claim, and that would be the decisive establishment of a European culture; even then, Tennyson would remain the most faithful echo of the original voice of a nation. He is not only British, but insular. To this fact he owes a certain narrowness of outlook; but on the other hand he gains therefrom an incomparable plenitude and sureness in the intuition of the deep attachment of his race to traditions, to feelings, and to horizons, of which he has known how to reveal the ineradicable force, the freshness, and the tranquillity.

3. *Beddoes, Hood, Elliott, etc.*—*The brief and tragic career* of Beddoes [1] shows clearly how inexact it would be to place about 1830 the actual end of Romanticism. Impregnated to the innermost core of his being with that form of moral disquietude which the weak and nervous creatures of all nations had experienced, he owed it to his temper, where the germs of disorder were deeper and more organic, to remain attuned to it, in an epoch during which the spirit no longer blew that way. His work, *unequal in many respects, retains, however, a pathetic and* touching interest. Several of his lyrical poems have an inspired flow, a poignant melancholy, which recall a Shelley. His best drama, *Death's Jest Book,* is perhaps the most astonishing miracle of that intuitive divination which revived the spirit of the Elizabethan theatre among certain privileged writers of the nineteenth century. And if the daring of the imagination, the spontaneously figurative quality of the language, the ease and strength of the rhythm, are made more intricate by a restless intellectual research, *this philosophical preoccupation is brought into har*mony with the passionate flight of an untrammelled genius, as in the work of a contemporary of Shakespeare. On the other hand, the obsession of mystery, of terror, of gruesome details, the fasci-

[1] Thomas Lovell Beddoes, born in 1803, studied medicine at Göttingen, led a wandering life in Germany and Switzerland, poisoned himself in 1849, leaving poems, *The Improvvisatore* (1821), *The Bride's Tragedy* (1822); a drama, *Death's Jest Book*, and other poems, etc., appeared after his death (1850-51) *Poetical Works*, ed. by Gosse, 1890; *Poems*, ed. by Colles, 1907; see the study by L. Strachey (*Books and Characters*), 1922; G. Moldauer, *T. L. Beddoes* (Vienna), 1924.

nation of death, together with a trace of Mephistophelean irony, seem to indicate the influence of continental Romanticism and of German literature.[1]

The figure of Hood[2] is not less suggestive. He could catch a glimpse of Keats, and his early poetry is steeped in the radiation of that remembrance. His life is one long story of suffering, fraught with troubles, and he appears to have been a creature singled out by Fate for affliction. The Romanticism of emotion is deeply rooted in his nature, and indeed represents his true temperament as well as his experience of life. Like others of the same sensitive disposition, however, he has the gift of sparkling humour, and no one with the exception of his friend Lamb has redeemed the pertness of his puns with so rich a display of original imagination. His humour was more successful than his pathos, and it was by holding a brief as a jester that Hood managed to earn from the public a less scanty living. But before his death he returned to themes where he was truest to himself, investing his verse with the deep note of true emotion; on such work his reputation rests to-day.

In *The Song of the Shirt* and *The Bridge of Sighs*, the Romantic feeling of individual suffering is extended into social compassion. Thus these two poems reveal a transition parallel to that in the novels of Dickens and Kingsley. Such pieces, where the poignant force of feeling is not always clothed in faultless form, and several shorter but perfect masterpieces, whose appeal recalls Wordsworth with an even more tender touch, give the literary figure of Hood a characteristic feature: the feminine delicacy of one who through suffering is forced back into himself, there to discover in intuitive perception and sympathy the source of a deep simplicity which is equal to the greatest art.

[1] George Darley, born in 1795, of Irish descent, was another example of a persisting Romanticism, the first expressions of which were anterior to 1830. *The Errors of Ecstasie*, 1822; *Labours of Idleness*, 1826; *Sylvia*, 1827; *Thomas à Becket*, 1840; *Ethelstan*, 1841. He edited the works of Beaumont and Fletcher in 1840, and died in 1846. *Nepenthe*, ed. by Streatfeild, 1897. *Poetical Works*, ed. by Colles, 1908.

[2] Thomas Hood, born in 1790 in London, the son of a publisher of Scottish descent, studied engraving, was subeditor of the *London Magazine*, connected with Charles Lamb, etc.; his serious poetry was coldly received; his *Odes and Addresses to Great People* (1825) were a great success, just as his *Whims and Oddities* (1826-27). After many tentative efforts in literature, he died in 1845, a poor man, amid the most cruel suffering. *Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerrold, 1906; *Works*, 11 vols., 1832-34. See Jerrold, *Thomas Hood, His Life and Times*, 1907; Oswald, *Thomas Hood, und die soziale Tendenzdichtung*, 1904.

It is also to his social inspiration that Elliott[a] owes the survival of his work, in itself rather uneven. It reveals, even at this late date, abundant traces of the phraseology and rhythms of the eighteenth century. His vehement emotion is usually unable to create for itself an original expression; but some of his political poems are irresistibly powerful and generous. His work evinces as well the rudiments of a distinct talent for description. His landscapes, and his rustic scenes, have the colouring of reality, with a suggestion of delightful freshness.

4. *Pre-Raphaelitism: D. G. Rossetti, Morris.*—A little before 1850, a number of young artists, drawn together by similar aspirations, make a common doctrine for themselves. Classical tradition in art, even after the advent of Romanticism, is as imperious as ever. Vainly have Constable and Turner renovated landscape painting; the teaching of the schools will not depart from the cult of former ideals of nobility, which have become as empty as they are theatrical. Technical skill now reflects the hollow nature of the inspiration behind it; it demands no effort, is lax, and even lends to an art which is little else than make-believe. Such are certainly not the methods of enthusiastic painters who, enthralled by beauty, succeed in making their delineation not unworthy of the original. Long before the reign of sham artistry, one school of painting had proved what could be done by faith, when served by scrupulous devotion to art. The primitive Italian painters put on canvas only such figures or visions as appealed to their hearts; so there was the atmosphere of deep truth in the sweetness or naïvety of their work, while all the passion of religious love for God's creation found expression in the faithfulness and the minuteness of their realism. The example they set shows the way by which a degenerate art can yet be redemmed. Just as with them, a creed is necessary; it has to be lived up to, and technical skill must be subservient to it. As the painter's invention is more sincere, it will create more striking effects; and the more exact the means adopted to express it, the more telling will the work prove to be.

[a] Ebenezer Elliott (1781-1849), born in Yorkshire, the son of a manufacturer, was an iron-merchant by trade in Sheffield; published descriptive verse, *Vernal Walk* (1801), *Night* (1818), etc.; but owed his popularity to his *Corn-Law Rhymes* (1831), in which he denounced the egoism of the legal measures taken against the importation of foreign cereals. *Works*, 2 vols., 1876. See Watkins, *Life, Poetry and Letters of Elliott*, 1850.

There is one dominant personality in this Pre-Raphaelite group,[1] that of Rossetti,[2] painter and poet; his double vocation and the magnetism of his innate enthusiasm explain the foremost place he occupies, not only at the heart of the Pre-Raphaelite movement after 1850, but also in the first beginnings of that diffuse æstheticism which was to be one of the features of the closing years of the century. He himself has realised a type of existence in which the only principle is that of art, and he has given a concrete proof of its unity. His Italian blood is the source of his outstanding originality. To it he owes the strength and keenness of his sensations, the need and the cult of form, the certainty of an inherent purity in passion. He is a stranger to the hesitations of a divided Northern soul, when it comes up against the apparent conflict of the flesh and the mind.

But his plastic imagination did not find perfect satisfaction either in form or in colour. His half-English heredity and the influence of the moral environment in which his whole life was spent perhaps explain, in his temperament, the influx of a mystic idealism, whose expression tends to be symbolic. In his poetry as in his painting, he gradually drifted away from the realism of his early years.

And in Symbolism we have the key to the true character of his work. He is drawn towards it, from the first poem in which he reveals his style, *The Blessed Damozel*, to the powerful, gloomy visions of *The Cloud Confines*. And thus intellectuality comes to

[1] The best known of its members were William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais; Ford Madox Brown was not long in joining the group. They founded a review, *The Germ*, to propagate their ideas. Ruskin, although not actually identified with them, openly shared their opinions. E. C. Burne-Jones and G. F. Watts were inspired a little later by the same spirit.

[2] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, born in 1828, the son of an Italian refugee in England, received an English schooling, took up painting and followed the classes at the Royal Academy. He was also a poet. In 1849 he produced his first picture, while his first poems appeared in *The Germ* (1850). As the inspirer and leader of the Pre-Raphaelite movement he exercised a wide influence; collaborated in *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856), translated fragments of mediæval Italian verse, and the *Vita Nuova* of Dante (*The Early Italian Poets*, etc., 1861). In 1870 appeared his *Poems*, which Robert Buchanan condemned in an article ("The Fleshly School of Poetry," *Contemp. Review*, 1871) on the ground of their unhealthy sensuality. He added to his translations from the Italian (*Dante and His Circle*, 1874), published *Ballads and Sonnets* (1881), and died in 1882. *Collected Works*, ed. by W. M. Rossetti, 1886; *Works*, with notes, ed. by W. M. Rossetti, 1911. See biography by Knight, 1887; biography and letters, ed. by W. M. Rossetti, 1895; the reminiscences of Holman Hunt (*Pre-Raphaelitism*, etc.), 1905; the studies by Sarrazin (*Poètes mod. d'Angleterre*), 1885; Benson (English Men of Letters), 1904; Mourey, 1909; Mrs. Boas, 1914; Dupré (*Un Italien d'Angleterre*, etc.), 1921; E. Waugh, *Rossetti, His Life and Works*, 1928.



The Girlhood of Mary Virgin by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

penetrate what is primarily another conquest of Romanticism, a new application of feeling, grown supreme, to the adjoining domains of literature and æsthetics. Rossetti is the necessary link of communication between two Romantic movements, one of which ebbs away after the first thirty years of the century, while the other rises again in the last three decades. To him it was given to unite them; and in his personality they are associated with the needs properly belonging to the more intellectual period which intervenes. While he experiences to the full the influence of Keats, he is not impervious to that of Browning.

He was conscious of this, and always insisted upon the indispensable part played by the intellect in art. Poetical Pre-Raphaelitism, as he practised it, consists in an attitude of the artist, and a system of expression. The attitude is that of ecstasy, or of an emotion deep enough to offer the characteristics of religious worship, while passion itself is sublimated into a spiritual exaltation. There is a persuasive atmosphere of calm about this emotion, because it is deep and controlled; nothing betrays its intensity, save an occasional turn in the words employed, a tone, an insisting stress, which suffuses with meaning even the simplest expression. These general features are associated with an extremely lucid but intermittent power of attention, which, suddenly aware of some particular aspect of reality, brings it into extraordinary relief, endowing it with a wonderful implicit value. And as the aspects chosen are in nearly every case particular—trifling details, fleeting or subtle impressions—the closeness of the vision, and the fidelity of the descriptive talent, recall in the writings of Rossetti all the minute realism of Raphael's predecessors in painting.

Intensity here is not expressed directly, but by means of exterior signs. We must reflect in order to perceive it. Its expression is thus submitted to an intellectual process, and undergoes a transposition. His poetry has lived on the search after subtle suggestions, most often of a mystic or tragic nature. Its rare quality is to be found in the intimate union, with this element of subtlety, of an ardour which wholly exhausts the force of the emotions, and widens their limits, be they the most familiar or the highest, by lending to them the deep background of some indefinable anguish; while the imagination, delicately refined, and attracted by religious, archaic or allegorical visions, evokes pictures which have an appeal to mind and senses alike. From such

a wealth of material the artist derives an extraordinary power of original expression, the power of what remains implicit, the only force able to infuse new life into effects which pure Romanticism in its day had exhausted. Rossetti more than any other poet sought the magic key to true poetry in the spell which allows one to feel what is otherwise inexpressible.

The House of Life, his masterpiece, is a long sonnet sequence where he lays to contribution the most modern aspects of symbolism, and only very distantly recalls the uninterrupted allegory of the Middle Ages or of the Renascence. The theme of passionate love, at once sensual and intoxicated with a philosophical mysticism, has never been treated with more sumptuous variety and wealth, in a more subtle and fuller symphony of all the powers of man. His language is the instrument of a music more often liquid than sonorous: it is coloured or, more often, bathed in a pale spirituality; it rings with an eloquence that is powerfully implicit, and at the same time has a suggestive appeal to all the susceptibilities of the soul. When he sometimes attempts to imitate the style of ancient ballads, if he fails to give an impression of simple strength, of nervous rapidity, and to create the real atmosphere of mediæval times, he at least succeeds in skilfully condensing into stanzas of powerful imagery the uninterrupted sequence of a dramatic story, embodying the idea and realisation of an overshadowing destiny (*The White Ship, The King's Tragedy*, etc.). He is a little artificial in the use of his burdens; but, as in *Sister Helen,* his artificiality is felicitous.

Quite other is the temperament of William Morris,[1] a writer,

[1] William Morris, born in 1834, near London, studied at Oxford, was influenced by the Tractarians and Rossetti, and with the painter Burne-Jones became one of the central figures of a group of ardent æsthetes (The Brotherhood) whose organ was *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856); in it Morris published poems and prose tales. Renouncing an ecclesiastical career, he studied painting, and in 1861 became the inspiring mind in a firm of decorative art, where by his manifold activities he brought about a transformation in furnishing, etc., during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. His work as a writer continued in the publication of verse: *The Defence of Guinevere and Other Poems*, 1858; *The Life and Death of Jason*, 1867; *The Earthly Paradise*, 1868-70; *Love Is Enough*, 1872; *Poems by the Way*, 1891, etc.; in poetical translations of the classics: the *Æneid* and the *Odyssey*, 1867; or of French: *Old French Romances*, 1896; while his taste for Northern literature inspired *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung*, etc. (in verse), 1877; translations in prose (individual or in collaboration): *Grettir Saga*, 1869; *Volsunga Saga*, 1870; *Three Northern Love Stories*, 1875; *The Saga Library*, 1891-95; *The Tale of Beowulf*, 1895, etc. A convert to Socialism, he criticised his age in pages where are revealed his dreams of the future: *A Dream of John Ball*, etc., 1888; *News from Nowhere*, 1891, etc. Establishing a printing press in his manor at Kelmscott, he produced art editions. From his pen we have also a series of

artist and reformer. In him Pre-Raphaelitism is coloured by a nature whose instincts are more broadly English. His imagination fills out the frail forms characteristic of primitive painting; he delights in unfolding broad canvases where languorous effects are bathed in an atmosphere of serenity. He is of the lineage of Spenser, not of Keats, in his commingling of virile strength with the greatest refinement of touch. He spent his vigour in practical creative activities, where the zeal of the æsthete developed into the fuller passion of a social creed.

During his early years he came under the various influences of the idealistic revival, and mixed them up into a quintessential spirit of Romanticism. While at Oxford he was brought into touch with the Anglican renascence; he read and admired Carlyle and Ruskin; Tennyson became a very god for him; and in the first poems of Rossetti he experienced the thrill of a new type of beauty. His personality, after some hesitations, easily succeeded in finding itself. As it developed, it gained strength, but underwent little appreciable change. With *The Defence of Guinevere* closes the period of apprenticeship; *Jason*, *The Earthly Paradise* and *Poems by the Way* reveal an inspiration rich to overflowing. Even and pure, its hidden force is perceptible only in its easy flow. It murmurs in harmonious and cadenced song, the variety and suppleness of which recall at once the style of Chaucer and that of Spenser. It pours itself forth in innumerable rhythmic forms, but always with an ease and a sweetness peculiarly its own, which, without smoothing down their differences, give them the unity of a common tonality. Blank verse, rhymed verse, the complicated or the simple stanza, are all united in one absorbing music; and its quicker or slower measure, long or short, does not always succeed in redeeming it from a certain monotony; yet there is a fascinating spell in it which can awaken and soothe the pensive yearning of the soul.

In this murmurous stream the world of images is mirrored. The poetry of Morris is for the most part a succession of pictures,

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imaginative tales: *The Roots of the Mountains*, 1880; *The Wood Beyond the World*, 1894; *The Well at the World's End*, 1896; *The Sundering Flood*, 1897, etc. He died in 1896. *Collected Works*, ed. by May Morris, 24 vols., 1910, etc. Cheap editions of most of his works are obtainable. See the biographies or studies by Mackail (*Life of William Morris*, 1899; *William Morris and His Circle*, 1907); Vallance, 1897; Clutton-Brock (*William Morris, His Work and Influence*, 1897), Drinkwater (*William Morris, a Critical Study*, 1912); Rickett, 1913; Vidalenc (in *Art et Esthétique*, Paris, F. Alcan, 1920).

forming a vista of great and seemingly inexhaustible wealth. They are drawn from every point of the human horizon, from the past as from the present; but perhaps mostly from the lands of legendary or mysterious beauty; from the fable and from classical antiquity, above all from the chivalric tales and adventures of the Middle Ages, for those were the times of his heart's desire; and modern civilisation is blotted out, in the pictures of the world of to-day, to allow us to see only the fresh, green, unchanging countryside. Episodes taken from the Trojan War or from the English struggles in France, scenes from Scandinavian mythology or the Arthurian cycles, fugitive impressions noted from daily observation on the wayside—such are his themes. But in spite of their variety, there is one general quality which is common to them all, and it is their Romantic colouring. They all seem to weave themselves into a vast tapestry, an ornamental decoration of artistic beauty, wrought by an imagination that is enthralled by the phantasmagoria of the ages. And all the figures who meet there are bathed in a fresh, pensive, flower-like beauty; they convey the impression of souls whose spiritual destiny has brought with it a mysterious strength and a spontaneous grace; a strange light, an almost melancholy serenity seems to hover in their looks, whether they be heroes or traitors or maidens or lovers. And it is this air of sad reflection visible even beneath the smile, and haunting every portrait from the poet's pen, that reveals the general dominant tone of all his reverie: the feeling of voluptuous delight mingled with the bitterness gathered from the flight of time; and a sense of the bewildering confusion of reality and dreams, creating an atmosphere of constant semi-hallucination.

For this reason it is that his most dramatic pictures convey the impression of remoteness from actuality. In *The Earthly Paradise* he almost created a masterpiece. He gave the succession of the months and the changing temper of the year as a background to twenty-four tales, twelve of which are taken from antiquity and twelve from the Middle Ages. These with their interludes compose a very harmonious and delightful poem; but something is wanting in it: the direct appeal of the emotion to the heart. It remains remote from human nature; passion, suffering and conflict are seen as through a strange haze which dims the perspective of everything, and clothes the whole in a glow as soft as that which

lights us in our dreams. Such a realm as this is not one where the keenest and deepest inspiration can exist. The narrative art just as the charm of description is here employed solely as the instrument of a general suggestion, to which the poet's instinctive skill is untiringly applied, and which belongs, here again, to the category of Symbolism. The material world vanishes, to be replaced by a vision of beauty composed of joy and sadness; the whole thing is artificial, although the setting is that of nature; its contours may be definite enough, but the atmosphere is mysterious and misty. This magic touch of the modern impressionist in Morris sets his tales in a totally different sphere from that of Chaucer.

Thus the genius of Morris has its vein of morbidity as well. On the other hand, he has a liking for robust simplicity, and for the naïvety of primitive souls, which accounts for his being so greatly influenced by Germanic and Scandinavian mythology; in them he found as it were a complementary pole to his temperament. Instead of the over-refinement strung to a keen pitch of nervous intensity, and fused with all the ardour of the South, which he found in Pre-Raphaelitism, this Northern literature revealed to Morris a warlike savagery, violent passions and a strong but rough imagination. By obeying the dictates of his instinct in its search for compensation, he satisfied a considerable part of his moral self; namely, the affinity and sympathy he felt for Anglo-Saxon tradition and the spirit of the North. His journey to Iceland, his discovery of a new and imposing aspect of nature in its wild grandeur, the thrilling emotion he experienced at finding himself in the home of his forefathers, are the beginning of a decisive stage in his moral development. But even in this new domain he cannot be other than the æsthete, imbued to the core with Latin culture. As before in his preferential quest of mediæval art, it is the need for refinement that leads him to the ages and times of primitive man. He cannot continue to regard the material of his discovery as barbarian; he has to idealise it, to envelop it in a suffused, dreamlike colouring as his other visions, so that, while much of the original crudity is preserved, its harsher aspects are veiled to a large extent.

This new orientation is not without some resultant gain. Through it Morris can now illustrate the fulfilment of destiny with the larger vision of epic greatness; he can introduce the

dramatic element; he can make the issue depend upon the struggle of the individual, and in this way supply what was lacking in the too fatalistic atmosphere of his other works. "The Lovers of Gudrun" is the most animated of the episodes in *The Earthly Paradise;* the study of the sagas, leaving aside mere translations, in *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs,* suggested to him an epic which is at once a free imitation and, in certain respects, an original work. In it one feels a different inspiration; the vistas that open over rustling forests or the sea reveal a world in all the freshness of its spring; the keener Northern air replaces the feverish languorous atmosphere of the South. Themes familiar to the reader of to-day are treated here with skilful fidelity; the wilder elements are allowed to come to the fore, but are discreetly interpreted. The language, noble without affectation, jars in no way with the Germanic character of the legend, because the poet has shown a decided preference for Saxon words, and made a frequent use of composite terms, archaic phrases and expressions, which for the most part are successful. But the real merit of the form is to be found in the rhythm, in the rhyming anapæstic couplets of six accents; this regular cadence, supple, unrestrained, and marvellously springy, gives the story its fascination, and almost eliminates the danger of monotony in its somewhat long development.

The love of adventure, the attraction of an imaginary world, where beautiful human lives bloom out in open nature and unrestricted liberty, where unhappiness, suffering and death have themselves a dignity unknown in our industrial civilisation, have inspired the romancer as much as the poet in Morris. Or rather we may say that the novels of his later years are poems in prose, simple in style and yet musical. The charm in great part springs from their indefiniteness; their remote atmosphere soothes the aching of a mind galled by the tyranny of a vulgar present.

It is also the reaction of a wounded sensibility against the ugliness of the real that has stimulated the apostolic teaching of the socialist in Morris. He actively put his beliefs to practice, and gave the best proof of their sincerity; they withstood the trial of time, the jeers of scepticism, the mediocrity or narrow-mindedness of many of the people with whom they brought him into contact. His experience in this connection was decisive, for he found in his faith a satisfaction too deeply based upon the

conception of justice and the love of humanity, to allow of any disillusionment. *A Dream of John Ball* is a brief evocation of the obscure suffering of mankind in the past, of the fruitful ferment of revolt, of the progress which would make a better order of things possible, of the gap which still separates us from the fulfilment of this ideal, and of the necessary effort required to attain to it. The work is written in a language of moving racy appeal, which lends beauty to the generous note of fraternal sympathy, as well as to the bitterness of a courageous political criticism. *News from Nowhere* is the most enchanting of Utopias; the one which keeps farthest removed from material means of realisation, and from the genesis of the new world. With the unerring touch made possible only through the vision of a poet, it shows us the fulfilment of our best hopes and purest wishes, of the fondest and oldest dreams of mankind. And this ideal state seems quite within our reach, in all its concreteness, with its passion that knows no cruelty, and its griefs that are without the sting of bitterness; with its religion of happiness and brotherly sympathy, its peace of the mind, cured of all yearning for another world, in the calm and ever beautiful scenery of the earth transformed into a free natural garden. No English prose-writer has ever used a simpler and more captivating language. No book would be better suited to calm the feverish torments of the mind, if, in this kingdom of the possible, greater attention were sometimes paid to our very disquietude, our longing for improvement, our eternal need of change and inquiry.

While the literary activities of Morris are vast, they form only one part of his life's work. Much of his strength was employed in another sphere, where his noble ideals in art came into contact with the resistance of matter. He was a decorative painter in stained glass, in tapestry, in cloth, in paper-hangings; he founded a printing establishment, from the presses of which have come many beautiful works of art; and by degrees he slowly brought about a renovation in the decorative art both of England and of the Continent. Of one mind with Ruskin, but more active and less of a dreamer, he has propounded the principles and given the example of a conscientious technique, and a true inspiration, open at once to the present and its newest teaching, and to those unduly neglected lessons of the mediæval artists. In the designing of furniture as of ornaments, and the general

setting of the domestic interior, he has been the chief individual source of a European transformation. The various recent attempts to associate harmoniously the social factors in industry owe much to the energetic encouragement of Morris. He is not only a poet and an artist, but an apostle of many activities, untiring in effort, rich in accomplishments.

5. *Christina Rossetti; Coventry Patmore; Mrs. Browning.*—In Christina Rossetti[1] we have a personality, retiring and meditative, wrapped up in the modesty of feminine feelings and religious austerity. Her work is to be found scattered in a host of fragmentary poems, which represent momentary effusions in the life of her soul; she seeks to conceal rather than reveal herself, and leaves it thus to the reader to penetrate beneath the surface of her verse. Her work as a whole will scarcely be lasting; it has dry pages; yet there is in it an abundance of the freshest flowers, modest perhaps, but of a delicate perfume, which, once breathed, will haunt the memory of the reader.

She belongs to a tradition, however; her poetry pulsates with the spirit of impassioned Romanticism. But a veil of feminine reserve and of piety interposes itself between her heart and her words. The interest of her life is centred in religion; she is swayed by earnest moral thoughts, and by an ardent, though almost familiar, mysticism, which brings with it no mental disturbance. Despite the predominance of faith in her inspiration, her best pages are not those devoted to sacred themes. There is something too orthodox and sober in her devotion to inspire a poetry of great personality. Her continual meditation on death—a subject after her own heart—brings into her work a monotonous note, but it is of wider appeal.

The inner life of which we thus catch a glimpse is that of a proud, passionate, pure soul, which has experienced every emotion, even that of earthly love, but which has never entirely

[1] Christina Rossetti, younger sister of Dante Gabriel, born in London, 1830, lived with her mother in uneventful retirement, wrapped up in spiritual contemplation. She declined two offers of marriage on account of religious motives. At the age of eleven she already displayed her poetic gifts; her *Verses* (privately circulated) were printed in 1847; she collaborated in *The Germ* (1850); published *Goblin Market and Other Poems*, 1862; *The Prince's Progress and Other Poems*, 1866; *A Pageant and Other Poems*, 1881, etc.; critical articles, stories and tales, devotional works; *New Poems*, 1896, was published after her death in 1894. *Poetical Works*, ed. by W. M. Rossetti, 1904; *Poems* (selected), ed. idem (Golden Treasury Series), 1904. See *Family Letters*, 1908; biography and study by Bell, 1898; A. Symons (*Studies in Two Literatures*), 1897; Westcott, 1899.

yielded itself to any; a soul which, if it finds contentment in Divine love, does not wish to give too great expression to its joy, so much is asceticism a part of its nature. Sensitive in disposition, however, responsive to the influences of seasons and circumstances, she lends herself to the emotions of her joyless life, and expresses them in verse of crystalline purity, whose musical sonority is clear, though a trifle thin.

The most substantial of her poems are allegories in which we watch a curiously imaginative mind at work, weaving out of an exclusively psychological sensuality an exuberance of description, and toning down the passionate element to innocent caresses, whilst the conscience secretly astir is preoccupied with moral ends, and interprets itself by a kind of gracious symbolism. *Goblin Market* is a delightful fairy tale. The charm of a childish invention, and the gay spirit which animates this airy fantasy, serve to conceal a theme of graver import: the dread of sensual folly, and the severity inherent to a doctrine of sacrifice and renunciation.

In this early work, it is manifest that Christina Rossetti still takes pleasure in the quality of the form she employs; she delights in verbal profusion, and the skilful use of metre. But her art very soon avoids anything that might suggest the painstaking effort of the stylist, while her lyrical gifts are more and more concentrated upon using the most simple means. Her delicate and shifting impressions are conveyed in a language of easy flow, and develop with the semblance of absolute spontaneity. The vigorous note, the accentuated tone are rare, or scarcely perceptible; and yet the rhythm and the melody of the words are powerfully expressive. Many of these effusions, in their sweetness and direct sincerity, have an undernote of grief which would recall the touch of Verlaine, had not the poetess been careful to restrain and curb the elements of morbid melancholy and regret, as soon as these tend to appear. Their momentary presence, however, leaves a tremor rippling over the smooth and limpid surface of her style. This pure form of poetry permits of artistic elegance in only one sense—that of the naturally varied prosodiacal measure. The sonnets, of too easy and flowing a nature to possess any strong structural beauty, are nevertheless attractive by their soft colouring and elegiac tenderness. It is to her nobility of soul, which never seeks to abuse a natural gift of

eloquence, nor overstep the truth of her inspired fervour, that Christina Rossetti owes the dignity and charm of her literary personality.

It is also the religious sentiment that gives unity to the figure of Coventry Patmore.[1] From an early age, he developed a tendency to spiritual refinement, and associated it to the theme of conjugal love; once converted to Roman Catholicism, he tended in his last works towards the fullness of visionary mysticism. Above all he is the poet of the domestic idyll, of marriage sanctified by tenderness, and no less by due respect to the more external demands of society; where the harmony of hearts rules supreme, but where tradition also plays its part. As Tennyson had shown, no theme comes nearer to expressing certain deep-rooted desires of the modern English soul, or its resolution to beautify with pious reverence the emotions and episodes which lead to the union of two lives. The subject of betrothal and marriage had been coloured by the Victorian public with a kind of complacent sentimentalism, in which certain national preferences came to the fore. The intimate pictures drawn by Patmore have a grace both warm and voluptuous, beneath their somewhat conventional respectability. In the flights of his imagination, he combines an ardour and an eagerness which can transfigure the realities of the home; but such flights are regrettably short. His diction shows delicacy, and his verse is skilfully adapted to subjects sometimes of the simplest order; but he does not always avoid a false elegance of style, a prosaic form of expression, the abuse of broken cadences; in trying to weave a poetic halo round the familiar aspects of middle-class life, he has been courageous enough, but too often his talent cannot rise above the mediocre atmosphere of his subject. One might single out as his best work the purely lyrical poems—the odes, which are decidedly less popular, and somewhat laboured, but which open wide horizons, show a wonderful wealth of rhythmic devices, and continue the traditions of the great English visionaries.

The early work of Mrs. Browning[2] did not give promise

[1] Coventry Patmore (1823-96); librarian at the British Museum; *Poems*, 1844; *The Angel in the House* (I., *The Betrothal*; II., *The Espousals*), 1854-56; *The Unknown Eros and Other Odes*, 1877. *Poems*, ed. by Champneys, 1906; *The Angel*, etc., introd. by Mrs. Meynell, 1905. See biography and correspondence, by Champneys, 1901; studies by Gosse, 1905; Burdett, 1921.

[2] Elizabeth Barrett, born in 1806 in the north of England, the daughter of a rich landowner, studied the ancient classics, began writing at an early age and made

of a great poetess. In her first manner she shows a docile nature, trying to find itself, remembering, imitating much. For antiquity and for Greece she displays a youthful enthusiasm; she is decidedly fond of all that savours of the didactic; and thus her verse tends towards a kind of belated pseudo-classicism, in which are mingled the influences of Pope, Byron and Campbell. *The Battle of Marathon* and *An Essay on Mind* are little else than the first attempts of a zealous schoolgirl, who is still under the spell of eighteenth-century diction, rhetoric and rhythm. But her temperament had in it the germs of a sincere Romanticism of the emotions, which grew by degrees; and imitation had its share in this development, but her own spontaneity is felt in it as well. Here and there we catch a personal note or a salient trait. Her mystical dramas, *The Seraphim* and *A Drama of Exile*, are still full of suggestions too passively accepted; Byron and Moore she lays to contribution, and even Shelley, from whom she naïvely copies her spirit choirs. Yet such works have a power that cannot be mistaken. In places she displays the sublime beauty of biblical imagination.

It is by the poetry of feeling and vision that Mrs. Browning comes finally to find herself. No doubt influences can still be traced in the development of her personality. After an interval of twenty years, she takes up again the themes of the preceding generation. The series of her lyrical pieces group themselves first of all round the Middle Ages, and here her model is Coleridge rather than Shelley or Keats. In *The Romaunt of Marg'ret Isobel's Child*, the *Rhyme of the Duchess May*, the effects of mysterious atmosphere and tragic passion are handled

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her first venture in 1819 in an epic poem, *The Battle of Marathon*; published *An*

Portuguese, 1847; *Casa Guidi Windows*, 1851; *Aurora Leigh*, 1857, *Poems Before Congress*, 1860. She died in 1861; her last works appeared in 1862. *Complete*

Leigh, ed by Forman, 1899

rett Browning were pub-

ngram (Eminent Women

ies, 1883), Merlette (*Vie*

ati (*Elizabeth Browning*

98; N A Bald (*Women*

(Representative Women

series), 1928.

with talent; but the archaism is artificial, the rhythm is laboured, and the felicity of form ever of short duration. In these poems there are only the elements of an original personality, traceable in various evocations, landscape sketches, and mere episodes.

When she comes to deal with subjects relating to her own time, which encourage, as it were, an immediate outpouring of the self, the talent of Mrs. Browning is at last wholly liberated. Then, her forcefulness, the inner flame of her imagination, can mould and adapt to her purpose even the most rebellious elements in vocabulary, and pour themselves forth in verse as yet uneven, but radiating with soft or powerful gleams of beauty. Her lyricism possesses a remarkable quality of suggestion; quick bird's-eye views, bold and new images, a divining sense of the subtle analogies which link up matter and soul. Her pictures of nature show a keen intensity, an eloquent, startling concentration. At the same time this Romanticism, essential to her nature, is soaked in intellectuality. For the literary ideal she sets herself is still didactic, oratorical and erudite. Possessing such mixed tendencies, it is no wonder that she should find herself perfectly adapted to the atmosphere of the Victorian age. She does not need to impose herself upon the public; her great success is fairly immediate. Yet her lyrical poems are marred by a persistent vein of scholarly allusions, of abstract or forced language, and of jarring verse, which, running through the very core of her poetry, crops up all too often, and allows itself but too rarely to be forgotten.

Her poetry therefore finds its purest effusion in those moments of surrender to emotion or unrestrained passion, when feeling at its strongest exclusively directs and creates the song of the soul. To such moments belong elegies of instantaneous indignation, as *The Cry of the Children,* or of grieved sympathy, as *Cowper's Grave;* above all, the admirable series of *Sonnets from the Portuguese,* where an ecstatic love, at once grateful and still penetrated by the thought of death, blossoms out into mystic adoration, in one of the finest offertories which have ever given utterance to a soul bestowing itself unreservedly.

The most important work from the pen of Mrs. Browning, *Aurora Leigh,* presents a problem that is ever new: the conflict in verse-writing between independence of thought on the one hand, and the demands of form on the other. This philosophical

novel develops with a force, and an impatience of all verbal restraint, which in a sense are justified by the warmth of the inspiration, and by the life of a mind to which all crises appeal, whether those of the social order or of modern faith. There is in it a feeling of the inner tragedies of the soul, rich and deep enough to give rise to genuine moral pathos and moving sublimity. Besides, the writer's imagination does not remain dormant; it spreads over the events, and even over the reflections which often interrupt their course, the breadth of nature, in the charm of its rugged or softened aspects. Even the freedom of the blank verse contributes happily to the varied movement of the tale, as it passes on from the things of everyday life to the heights of a glowing idealism. But the texture of the work is not woven closely enough; its constituent elements lack coherence and fusion; there is too much dross in it, too many prosaisms, lapses into the commonplace, unfortunate liberties in the phrasing; and the measure, swept along with over-feverish haste, on its way, unconcernedly, goes through long stretches of dry and rough ground. What might have been one of the great poems in the English language remains but the noble and enticing confession of a poetess with a generous heart. For this reason, and with due regard to some pages of unblemished beauty, the work will probably survive the exaggerated contempt which its undeniable faults have called down upon it in our day.

6. *Bailey; Clough; Matthew Arnold; FitzGerald.*—At the same time as Victorian poetry draws much of its inspiration from an ever-flourishing Romanticism, it can also lay claim to a type of verse the central motive of which is rather intellectual. This age was engrossed in the preoccupation of the ultimate problems of life. *In Memoriam* and *Aurora Leigh* reveal the influence of general themes on temperaments such as those of Tennyson and Mrs. Browning, whose spontaneous reaction to facts and ideas was ruled by the exigencies of sensibility. In the case of other writers, the seeds of philosophical poetry fall on yet better prepared ground; with them, it becomes an all-absorbing inspiration, and tends to organise round ideas all the work of literary invention and expression.

In this respect Bailey[1] is a transitional poet, for a feverish

[1] Philip James Bailey (1816-1902), at the age of twenty wrote a philosophic epic, *Festus* (published anon., 1839), which had a great success. His other works met

Romanticism fans into a glow the metaphysical musings of his *Festus*.

Although this work was planned independently, it nevertheless reflects the genius of Goethe, whom Bailey intended to surpass by penetrating still farther into the subject of *Faust*, and introducing into it all the ardent humanitarian optimism of the modern religious conscience. The effort is noble, but the writer is sadly unequal to the task which his ambitious hope has set before him. There is too great a contrast between his abrupt and riotous art, and the serenity of Goethe, for the reader to be able to forget it. *Festus* is not, however, mere pretension; at times, an Elizabethan fury enlivens the heaviness of an argumentative theology; lines of great beauty, flights of the imagination, suddenly bear off the reader to sublime heights; but the fall is only more terrible when he crashes back upon the uneven ground of Puritan argument, and into the dreadful monotony of Bailey's blank verse. Despite its obscurity, the poet's thought may not be lacking in breadth of outlook; but the form in which he clothes it, with all its naïvety, its clumsiness, its prosaism, is totally unacceptable. Only a public with little critical judgment could accept the one for the sake of the other.[1]

It is in a very different tonality that the philosophic poetry of Clough and Arnold attempts to perform the miraculous feat of reconciling passion with clear thinking into a short-lived union.

With Clough[2] one must admit that the attempt is unsuccess-

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with an indifferent reception (*The Angel World*, 1850; *The Mystic*, 1855, etc.). *Festus*, revised on several occasions by the author, was reprinted in 1893, etc. See biographical study by Ward, 1905.

[1] *The Mystic* is quite unreadable and lapses into mere literary pathology.—Interesting studies, besides that of Bailey, are to be found in the "Spasmodic" poetry of Sydney Thompson Dobell (1824-74; *Balder*, 1854); in the verse of Alexander Smith (1830-67; *A Life Drama*, 1853, etc.); and in the epic poem of Richard Hengist Horne (1803-84), *Orion* (1843), where the thought is difficult to understand but rich, the form at times brilliant (other works: *Cosmo de Medici*, *The Death of Marlowe*, dramas, 1837; *A New Spirit of the Age*, social studies, 1844, etc.).

[2] Arthur Hugh Clough, born in 1819 in Liverpool, the son of a merchant, studied at Rugby under Thomas Arnold, and later at Oxford; was influenced by Newman, then turned towards a faith of free religious principles. He occupied several university posts, travelled on the Continent, and died in Florence in 1856, after having published: *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*, 1848; *Amours de Voyage*, 1849; *Dipsychus*, 1850. *Poems and Prose Remains*, etc., ed. by his wife, 1869; *Poems*, ed. by Milford, 1910; ed. by Whibley, 1913. See studies by Waddington, 1882; Lutonsky, 1912; Stopford Brooke (*Clough*, etc.), 1913; Guyot (*Essai sur la formation philosophique du poète A. H. Clough*), 1913; J. I. Osborne, 1920.

ful. He is one of those writers who solicit the reader's sympathy by the power of a sincere and lofty thought, but as an artist he is incomplete. The fact that his work remains the cult of a discreet and restricted circle of admirers, shows how great an appeal can be made to the English mind by strength of character and the frank discussion of moral problems. To those consciences which are free from prejudice but not from uneasiness he speaks in a somewhat austere, but direct language; and it is enough.

The work of Clough supplies, as it were, an historical document in the progress of ideas. His is the generation which receives the full shock of the new religious doubts. Attracted for a brief spell by Newman's group, Clough reasserts his individuality and turns towards the "Broad Church." His faith sweeps away all dogma, and centres its belief in the recognition of duty and in the intuition of the Divine. Such is the source of that spontaneous gladness of soul, that sane outlook, so courageous and infectious; to his inner candour, and to the doubts which remain part of his nature, he owes, however, a tenor of soul more responsively human, and more flexibly supple. It cannot be said that he never knew the peace of the mind, but it is also true that he never ceased to seek it. Through these two traits he remains a kindred spirit to those anxious devotees of truth, worshippers of action as well, for whom action is both the aim and the measure of truth.

The longest poems of Clough are not his best. The *Amours de Voyage* is a very prosaic novel in verse. In *Dipsychus* we have a work of strange conception, of substance and interest, where the author deals with problems which are never out of date. No one in England has expressed more clearly than [illegible] the conflict [illegible] id the ever [illegible] Here, again, there is the suspicion of a certain parallelism with the subject of *Faust*, but it keeps within acceptable limits. In a series of episodes, the meaning of which appears clearly enough, the progress of a conscience to a state of mature wisdom which will save its dignity, though allowing of compromise in action, is shown in a way both strong and subtle. But the dialogue is too simple and at the same time too laboured; it lacks the sparkle of symbolic

imagination, or the artistic concentration, which might have created an impression of beauty.

The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich, like the *Amours de Voyage,* is written in hexameters of uneven flow, and resembles too often the style of a conversation with the feeblest attempt at cadence. Yet it is in this work that Clough gives most successfully his original note as a poet—in the animation, the gaiety, the humour of the narrative; in a freshness and a virginal purity of soul, which, allied to the strong and moving impressiveness of the Scottish setting, re-create the true note and atmosphere of the classical idyll, despite the novelty of a different scenery. The love of nature is, with Clough as with many others, the emotion which fired and spiritualised a style otherwise clumsy, and allowed a halting inspiration to soar. Several of the shorter poems, in the form of confessions and effusions, have also this redeeming grace; their language is one of music and imagery, where the nobleness of the ideas is worthily expressed in verse at once sedate and beautiful.

With Matthew Arnold [1] beauty was more consciously the object of a desire and a cult. He had the fine sensibility of the scholar, and his mind was deeply impregnated with all the teaching of ancient art. His imagination fondly dwelt upon Greek scenes and times; under the direct influence of Hellenism, he formed an ideal of sober and pure simplicity, and made it the constant model of his style. With this purity, Arnold combined the serious note of deep reflection which was his as well. His poetry bears the stamp of intellectualism; and no writer better represents the new character of the Victorian age, in its contrast with the Romantic period. Arnold was well aware of what set him apart from Byron and Shelley, and expressed it himself. Did not their impassioned verse betray too keenly the emotion which fired their hearts? In Arnold's days the poet has acquired a certain modesty and reserve; he can now modulate his voice and discipline his song, while his intelligence like a prism refracts and modifies his passion. To him the wild disorder of Romanticism should be replaced by a clear architecture, the design of which should be borrowed from the classical writers, those masters of a supreme sense of balance.

At once a poet and a philosopher, he thus wanted his work

[1] For the life, etc., of Matthew Arnold, see above, Book VI. chap. ii. sect. 5.

to be moulded after a strong traditional fashion. With the Greeks—Sophocles, Homer and Epictetus—the guides he chose are among the calmest of the recent prophets: Wordsworth, who built up and willed his moral life; Obermann, sorrowful but stoical in his despair. These combined influences, acting upon a temperament more gifted in criticism than in creation, stimulated him to flights of poetry clearly thought out and full of substance, condensed in carefully selected words, and swayed by an exacting sense of accuracy and fitness.

The poetical work of Arnold is not absolutely in the front rank of English literature. It has the somewhat cold temper of a well-calculated impulse to write, and very seldom does it suggest an inevitable effusion. But in the order of philosophical poetry it occupies a prominent place, though it does not owe it to its most ambitious efforts, or its clearest intentions.

A great part of this work may be classed as only estimable and refined, but slightly artificial; it is that which the scruples of the humanist or the thinker deprived of all warm emotion. Many of the shorter poems of moral analysis are simply dissertations in verse; they have elegance and precision, but their sobriety is bought at the price of a prosy dryness. The rhythm is too often awkward. More ornate, and attempting at times to reach the sublimity of grand style, are the poems which Arnold conceived and wrote when under the exclusive influence of classicism; but these poems are not the best. His humanistic studies offer a source of sincere inspiration, to which can be traced not only his careful discrimination in language, his delicate evocations, and all that background of imagery and allusion of so eloquent an appeal to the cultured reader, but also the preference—which grew to be instinctive—for subjects, comparisons and a tonality far removed from the immediate facts of everyday life. Passing into this sphere of scholarly art, the need for poetic expression loses its animating force by losing the sense of unadulterated truth; it adapts itself to tricks, and indirect methods of realisation. Despite their solid merits, Arnold's epic, tragic or mythological poems have lost the prestige which lately enshrouded them. A spark of genius lights up only from time to time the pages of *The Strayed Reveller, Empedocles on Etna, Merope, Sohrab and Rustum, The Sick King in Bokhara.* A poem such as *Empedocles,* the faults of which were only too apparent to

Arnold, offers a keener interest because it deals more closely with the ever-pressing problems of thought, and thus makes up for what it lacks in musical quality.

The irony of fate has decreed that Arnold's verse shall continue to be read because of its inner Romanticism, which precisely was what the poet sternly tried to repress. A repression, no doubt, that nevertheless bore fruit, and that adds a dignity to his more discreet avowals; an inevitable repression as well, which would never have been tolerated by one of greater lyrical genius, and of a more ardent inspiration. The fact remains that the most lasting beauties of his work, a work that is above all conscious, are just those which the poet himself did not reach of set purpose.

The true note of Arnold's temperament is sadness: a pensive melancholy, essentially Romantic in origin, which gains sterner tones from the more definite anxieties of the century, now more sedate and mature. Here again, as in the case of Clough, we find the uneasiness of a soul torn between meditation and strong self-possession on the one hand, and on the other, the claims of action; but with Arnold there is above all the feeling of a wound, the loss of the cheerful temper which Clough owed to the possession of a satisfying faith. The vague Christianity of Arnold, the moral pantheism to which all his philosophical reflection tends, seems to have left in his inner self an emptiness, a scar which is revealed only in his poetry. The loss of all positive belief came as a momentous experience to him as to many of his generation, and hopelessly destroyed all his joy of life. We thus catch a first glimpse of the pessimism of an age, suspended in uncertainty between a world which has passed out of existence, and one which is not yet formed; and this pessimism is destined slowly to spread and colour the last years of the century. Arnold is one of the forerunners of what will prove to be a contagious movement, in the province of letters as well as in that of feeling.

And it is the presence of this metaphysical or religious anguish which gives the note of eloquence to the most moving of his poems. In *Dover Beach* it is clearly perceptible; in *Thyrsis* it is hidden, and mixed with the regret awakened by the death of a friend; while in *The Forsaken Merman* it becomes still more elusive, undistinguishable from a fanciful elegiac spirit. From the same source comes the poignant note that is occasionally felt

in the stanzas inspired by the Grande-Chartreuse, or by the memory of Sénancour. And when, in *The Scholar Gipsy*, the great modern melancholy is broadened and spiritualised into a symbol of mystery and dreams, the poetry of Arnold strikes its most original and its highest note.

By a coincidence natural enough, the sincerity of the theme brings to their greatest degree of efficiency the gifts of invention and fastidious choice which impart its rare quality to the art of Arnold. The delicate achievements of his classical talent give a felicitous, an easy and graceful expression to the confession of his incurable nostalgia. His feeling for nature is rich with suggestions, refined by the influence of sober Greek landscape; it is almost always associated with the emotion of the past, the keen intuitive sense of the flight of time; and the forests, the rocks of the Alpine heights, the noble meadow-lands or the mystic sunsets seen in the neighbourhood of Oxford, are coloured in his poetry with the indefinable pathos which only memory and the fleeting quality of things can inspire.

These short poems come very near to what might be perfection in philosophical poetry. Their rhythm shows a careful and yet not over-elaborate construction, and there is in them sureness of touch, along with an Attic elegance in style through which runs a modern vein of more intense suggestion. They captivate the mind of the reader with their powerful manifold charm; for the inherent value of the idea is brought out by a wealth of artistry, in which the magic force of the words, the fascination of the images, the soft suffused glow which lights the whole, unite in one harmonious accord.

FitzGerald[1] is a lover of solitude and mystery, a dreamer whose thoughts are discreetly coloured by visions both gloomy and voluptuous. He resembles no one, but, if a comparison were hazarded, it might be said that he would find a place not far from Matthew Arnold. His poem, essentially pessimistic, intel-

[1] Edward FitzGerald (1809-83) led the life of an indolent, refined lover of literature; published a dialogue in prose, *Euphranor*, 1851; a translation of Calderón, 1853; rendered a Persian poem into English verse (*Salaman and Absal*, 1856); and combined in a free poetic version the quatrains of the Persian poet, Omar Khayyám (*The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyám*, 1st ed., 1859, three later editions of this were considerably revised). At first unnoticed, then hailed as a masterpiece, this slender volume has never lost its popularity. See *Rubaiyat*, ed. by Dole, 1898; ed. by Heron-Allen, 1908; French translations by Nicolas, 1867, Henry, 1903, Grolleau, 1917, etc.; *Letters and Literary Remains of Edward FitzGerald*, ed. by A. Wright, 1903; study by Benson (English Men of Letters), 1905

lectual, and calmly pathetic, combines an imaginative Romanticism with the discipline of a sober form. By a unique stroke of fortune, the translation of the mediæval, Persian quatrains, modernised with bold yet delicate skill, moulded and arranged in a personal way, expresses the innermost soul and subtlest essence of nineteenth-century melancholy, which, acquiring thus the depth of a far-distant past, seems to spread as well over the whole human destiny. The oriental colour of the setting, exact and yet toned down, together with the inspiring power of the rhythm, is a miracle of refined literary adaptation; and the art which has formed and condensed each pearl in this poetic necklace, which has also polished them and added to their grace the rich lustre of thought, is not unworthy of being compared with that of the greatest artists.

7. *Robert Browning.*—The work of Robert Browning[1] fully exemplifies one of the dominant tendencies of Victorian poetry, and probably the more important one, because it comes nearer

[1] Robert Browning, born in 1812 in London, the son of a banker and of a mother of half-German, half-Scottish descent, was educated at home, and at an early age wrote verse, publishing anonymously in 1833 a poem entitled *Pauline;* then *Paracelsus,* 1835; *Sordello,* 1840; he also essayed drama, of which *Strafford* appeared in 1837. Many lyric and dramatic pieces (*Pippa Passes,* 1841; *King Victor and King Charles,* 1842; *Dramatic Lyrics,* 1842; *The Return of the Druses,* 1843; *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon,* 1843; *Colombe's Birthday,* 1844; *Dramatic Romances,* 1845; *Luria, A Soul's Tragedy,* 1846, etc.) appeared in series, and were collected in 1847 under the title of *Bells and Pomegranates.* After his marriage with Miss Barrett (1846) he resided for the most part in Italy. *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day* appeared in 1850; *Men and Women* in 1855. The continued indifference on the part of the public, and the death of his wife in 1861, would explain a period of retirement, from which he emerged in 1864 with *Dramatis Personæ,* and more important still *The Ring and the Book* (1868-69). From then onwards he was recognised by a wide élite and was the recipient of national honours. He published numerous poems and collections of verse: *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau,* 1871; *Fifine at the Fair,* 1872; *The Inn Album,* 1875; *Pacchiarotto,* 1876; *La Saisiaz,* 1878; *Dramatic Idyls,* 1879-80; *Ferishtah's Fancies,* 1884; *Asolando,* 1889. He died at Venice in 1889 and was buried in Westminster Abbey. *Poetical Works,* ed. by Birrell, 2 vols., 1898; *Complete Works,* ed. by Porter and Clarke, 1898; *Poems,* Oxford ed., 1905; *Works,* Centenary ed., 1912, etc.; *Sordello,* ed. by Whyte, 1913; *The Ring and the Book,* ed. by Dowden, 1912; *Essay on Shelley,* ed. by Garnett, 1914. See the biographies or studies by Symons (*Introduction to the Study of Browning*), 1886, new ed., 1906; Sarrazin (*Poètes mod. d'Angleterre*), 1888; Sharp (Great Writers), 1890; Jones (*Browning as a Philosophic and Religious Teacher*), 1891; Brooke (*Poetry of Robert Browning*), 1902; Mrs. Orr (*A Handbook to the Works of Robert Browning*), 1902; Dowden (*Life of Robert Browning*), 1904; Herford (Modern English Writers), 1905; Chesterton (English Men of Letters), 1908; Berger (*Quelques aspects de la Foi moderne dans les poèmes de Robert Browning*), 1907; idem (*"Robert Browning": Grands écrivains étrangers*), 1912; Griffin and Minchin (*Life of Robert Browning*), 1910; Lounsbury (*Early Literary Career of Browning*), 1912; Phelps (*Browning, How to Know Him*), 1915; F. M. Sim, *Robert Browning, Poet and Philosopher,* 1924.

to expressing the originality of the period: the craving for analysis and moral criticism. Browning's art is entirely pervaded by *intellectual curiosity, and almost merged in the systematic quest* of truth; it is parted from what is essential in pure science only by secondary intentions. The poet in whom this age was longest in recognising itself is the one who best answered, not as Tennyson to its easier and emotional genius, but to its intense desire for rationality in religious beliefs and in life.

He began by deeply receiving the influences of Romanticism; Shelley was to him a divine model. But very soon, the ardour of imagination and feeling was invested in him with a new intensity—the exalted consciousness of self, which develops into a penetrating, insisting and complex psychological reflection, and finally becomes a philosophy, a direct analysis of the working of the mind, not viewed in its concrete quality, as with Wordsworth, but *reduced to an interplay of ideas. One cannot say that Pauline* is a lyrical effusion; it is rather the strange confession of a writer who makes the state of his romantic soul the object of his study. In *Paracelsus* we have the tumultuous and superabundant outpouring of a doctrine which, grown impatient of all restraint, tries to express itself fully; it seethes within the drama of a single life. In this work, the personality of Browning is seen to be already formed; but the exuberance of youth is still perceptible in the more spontaneous flight of the imagination, in the full and cadenced notes, bearing the traces of an eloquent and musical ideal which he will abandon from now onwards. His original features will become more and more prominent, but he will never again show more truly his poetical genius.

In *Sordello*, the last of these early attempts, we find such a strong reaction against the survival of a rhetoric which no longer answers the intentions of the poet, such a decided assertion of a new style, the outcome of his original temperament, that the balance of the whole is destroyed; so much is implied, alluded to, or left to the understanding of the reader, that the expression becomes overcharged and burdened, and the language loses its æsthetic quality by developing over-much its value as an intellectual sign. *This work cannot be called a poem; rather it is a* confused series of invitations to probe and penetrate the subtleties of the writer's mind. A thesis is unfolded by means of a sym-

bolical tale, which under the mesh-work of so many abstract relations comes to be almost lost to view.

Browning recognised, however, that he had gone too far. The work of his more mature years follows a middle course, without ceasing to be arduous and original. However varied and considerable it may be, it lends itself to a general study. From the scenic dramas which have been actually staged (*Strafford* in 1837; *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, 1843; *Colombe's Birthday*, 1853) to the lyric of personal effusion, of which there are several examples, by way of the plays too concentrated to be ever acted (as, for example, *Luria)*, the dialogues and the different kinds of dramatic monologues, either separate (as *Dramatic Lyrics, Romances, Men and Women, Dramatis Personæ*, etc.), or grouped in series around a central theme (as in *The Ring and the Book)*, there is one single method applied throughout, with a resolution which shows that the poet is sure of the resources at his command. His object, according to his own definition, is the study of incidents which go to compose the development of a soul. In his opinion there is little else that merits serious consideration.

Browning's typical form, that towards which all the other forms may be said to converge, is the monologue; there properly resides the newness of his art. His main idea is to throw light upon the realm of consciousness, and to do this he frees himself from all the shackles which impede psychological analysis, whether they are connected with action and narration, or the laws of material probability, and the various occasions when the external world in actual life obstructs and obscures that of the spirit. The novel and even the drama cannot but reserve an important, often a dominant place, for this element of circumstance. The psychologist finds full liberty only in the direct and individual expression of each being. The degree of clearness indispensable to this expression can be reached only through the actual hold which each personality has upon the states of its inner life. And as the psychologist's curiosity is infinite, Browning gives free vent to his imagination, roams through time and space, and selects in history and among the intense possibilities of life whatever cases attract him, either by their strong normality, or by virtue of their exceptional value; the common feature of all the characters chosen being the inherent complexity which they possess, and

which they either realise themselves, or offer as a rich material to be exploited by the scrutinising eye that can read them more clearly.

The fault of the method lies in this last point. It is very rarely that one can, or that one wants to probe deeply into one's own consciousness. The monologue of classical tragedy had already fallen into discredit because of its artificiality. This kind of thinking aloud, meant to explain for the spectator's benefit a simple feeling or the moral position of an actor at a given time in the play, did not correspond very well to the illusion which the drama intended to create. But at least there was no attempt in this to explore all the inner being. It only aimed at revealing the secret of a certain attitude, the course and result of deliberation, at communicating verbally a factor of the situation which the plot did not actually display on the stage. Now in the monologue of Browning, infinitely more adaptable, and free from the conventional atmosphere as well as from the dialects imposed by tradition on orthodox tragedy, there is no less artificiality; indeed there is more. His ambition is very much greater; he wants to investigate the whole province of the soul, and the interplay of its reactions to the influence of environment; the actual drama is left out; with the result that our knowledge of the facts, of the conflict, and of the other characters, comes to us by way of one single voice; all the multiplicity of reality is seen from one unique angle of vision. For this formula in art to work, we must frankly leave aside the idea of likelihood, and of anything appertaining to concrete life. We do not hear the spontaneous utterance of a living being; it is not the soliloquy of a soul that we suddenly come upon; it is rather a self-disclosure in which we have the collaboration of an analyst at work. The confession, if we may so term it, is guided by a purpose of explanation, interpretation and appreciation; and we do not feel that we have before us a human soul unwittingly revealing itself, but a psychologist who is dissecting and a moralist who is judging it.

However moving, therefore, these studies may be, they are not essentially dramatic. In objectivity their effort is only relative. No doubt Browning shows an exceptionally many-sided mind, and a remarkable gift of adaptation; he is well read, and his erudition allows him to give a precise colouring to whatever

age or locality he may study. At the heart of his broad inqui into the various species of mankind, there is present the sam central motive which animates the *Légende des Siècles*, thi review of the ages and civilisations that was the natural outcom of a century of criticism and history. But his work is not; no does he wish it to be, an impartial mirror of reality. There is always some moral preoccupation in his psychology. If he is describing souls that are steeped in vice and in crime, he cannot repress a strong repugnance which breaks out in the words he lends them, and secretly shapes their discourses. His traitors stand out on a background in which one can read an implicit condemnation; his pages radiate impassioned preferences. His intellectuality and his doubts affect only the superficial part of his beliefs, or that which he regards as such. At the core there is an invincible, even aggressive belief in spirituality and soul; a doctrine of love as the touchstone of men, and the foundation of their real value. Before such problems as that of immortality, Browning evinces the desire to believe, rather than actual faith. But his thinking is essentially positive, and Christian without being orthodox. And so he has become the recognised guide, the master of all who seek rationality and at the same time a creed; not only is he the prophet of a liberal religion, but his poetry has been an instrument of grace.

Only intermittently is his verse a means of æsthetic enjoyment. Its supreme quality is of another order. Admitting the general artifice in his work, and the presence of the writer behind his characters, he affords his readers a keen intellectual pleasure. He speaks to the intelligence, or to the imagination in its highest form, that imagination which can effect syntheses, and group together related elements. With unlimited profusion, he gives us the joy of understanding and reconstructing characters; he makes us appreciate, better than any other writer of his time, the swarming variety of moral types. His portraits are admirable examples of penetration, strength and delicate colouring. He vigorously emphasises the dominant features, and indicates detail with a minute understanding of the individual trait. The same felicity of touch is to be found in his treatment of problems and theses. The relativity of perceptions, the distinct and interfering waves which the shock of a single event sends

surging through various minds (*The Ring and the Book*); the chance influences which at every instant are diverting the course of our inner destinies (*Pippa Passes*); the awakening of the first vague religious emotion in the soul of a doctor who has been the captive of empiricism (*An Epistle of Karshish*); the grounds for belief of a common pragmatist type (*Bishop Blougram's Apology*)—these "cases" among the best known present themselves to the mind. But there is no limit to the number of these small miracles of finesse and intuition; and the work of Browning is without doubt one of the richest and the most deep-reaching treatises in practical psychology that English literature has to offer, in a century when the novel, unstintingly and with such brilliancy, took upon itself the task of showing man what he really was.

To study things as they are, is the very end of scientific knowledge, in the broad sense in which the novel may pretend to figure among its instruments. Such a study is not and cannot be the main pursuit of poetry. Therefore, one might say that the error committed by Browning consists in having chosen paradoxically his means of expression. No fundamental necessity demanded that his analytical portraits, or his dissertations, should be expressed in verse. Still, one can suspect his reasons for desiring to retain, or in believing that he did retain, a poetical form. It is here not merely a case of passive fidelity to a tradition, though the eighteenth century had already presumed that moral analysis and rhythmic language go naturally hand in hand; nor is it the effect of a literary ambition which, taking shape as it did in the years of a romantic youth, did not change its name when it changed its object. If Browning continued all his life to put into verse themes which in themselves scarcely seem to call for this choice, it was not by obedience to a discipline accepted at one time, and then become habitual. In reality, it can be traced to an instinct of liberty, and, one might venture to say, to the law of least resistance. The spirit of poetic style, when liberally interpreted, permits audacious or irregular expressions, inversions, ellipses, and a spontaneity in order and rhythm, which prose, more severe in its modesty, does not usually tolerate. In order to instil some vivacity and life into his psychological dissections, Browning required a language that was easy, ener-

getic, humorous, familiar or technical; similarly, to trace the sinuous working of a dense and complex thought, he had to be able to upset freely the normal construction of sentences. Only an artist of genius could have run this rebellious metal into the mould of prose. A poet of unequal and often mediocre gifts has been able to clothe it in the flowing vesture of a versification which, by claiming the benefit of a prosodiacal regularity, in itself very approximative, felt free to sacrifice unscrupulously the deeper rhythms of language, and the needs of art, to the claims of philosophy.

The work of Browning, written in this original and mixed form, which is neither prose nor verse, often gives an impression of beauty; but it is beauty of a spiritual and austere type, although human. The grandeur of the intellectual effort, the nobility of the moral reflection, the depth or acuteness of the interrelations brought to light, are the really important factors in this general impression; but there are also glowing moments of tragic and sympathetic emotion. This beauty, therefore, is both ample and powerful; and Browning is not only one of the most fertile minds, but one of the very great writers in English literature.

On the other hand, the unfortunate fact remains that, driven to the pen by a rational impulse, he does not transform this impulse in the very act of creative invention. What he gives us is merely the product of his intelligence, in a form of insufficient elaboration and artistic polish. Thus the substance of his art is not fit for the communication of thought through the medium of æsthetic sensibility; and its form does not add to it that vast inherent suggestion, alone possessed by those words which are the immediate and constant outcome of intuition. His language is disjointed, his verse amorphous, and in the majority of cases, neither has any intrinsic value; nor do they bring us any revealing joy. The work itself abounds in immense stretches of barren thought; and the sterility and monotony of his style will reappear even in his most inspired pages.

He has, however, his actually inspired moods, when, under the spell of a more simple emotion, or of some striking symbol, powerful enough to call up and organise sounds and images, he reaches the heights of poetry, in the most precise sense of this term. Few are the poems which can be described as flawless; but they strike an extraordinarily intense and poignant

note in their charm, whose only fault is a touch of effort and strain.[1]

After the publication of The Ring and the Book, Browning is still himself; his moments of real, poetic inspiration become fewer, while his conversations and dissertations in verse on varied and strange subjects demand from his readers a more stoical courage than before. But his vigour of thought, his force of analysis, his gift of perceiving what the soul is, and of re-creating it, these retain their striking interest.

During his lifetime Browning had conquered the indifference of the public, and by now he has ceased to be a bugbear in literature. He is widely read; indeed, many of his poems have come *to be looked upon as part of the general patrimony.* His work resembles an imposing edifice, but all its parts are not equally strong. One-half will assuredly survive in the faithful study and worship of cultured readers; but it seems difficult to believe that posterity will not relegate the other half to the category of writings whose appeal is only to scholars and specialists.

To be sonsulted: Berger, *Robert Browning*, 1912; Stopford A. Brooke, *The Poetry of Robert Browning*, 1902; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. xiii. chaps. ii. iii. iv. v vii.; Charpentier, *La Peinture anglaise* (no date); Elton, *Survey of English Literature, 1830-80*, 1920; Lounsbury, *Life and Times of Tennyson*, 1915; Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1899; Montégut, *Ecriv. mod. de l'Angleterre*, 1885, etc.; Omond, *English Metrists*, 1921; Saintsbury, *History of English Prosody*, 1906; Sarrazin, *Poètes mod. d'Angleterre*, 1885; Verrier, *Essai sur les Principes de la Métrique anglaise*, 1909-10; Walker, *The Literature of the Victorian Era*, 1910.

[1] *By way of examples, mention should be made, not of the popular Evelyn Hope*, nor even of the equally popular *Love Among the Ruins*, although both poems are expressively musical—but of *A Grammarian's Funeral*, in which a thought, a sentiment, and a rhythm have all been moulded together by the same creative act; or of the end of *Saul*, or of *Childe Roland*, which remain fixed in the memory *because of their inner melody.*

CHAPTER V

REALISM

1. *Realism and the Literary Tendencies of the Victorian Era.*—Realism in Art is not a method but a tendency, that is to say, something of a variable and relative nature, which can manifest itself in very diverse forms, and is difficult to gauge according to any fixed standards. It cannot be said to constitute the fundamental element to which one can trace back, as it were, the attitude of a writer; it is an effect as well as a cause; it is subservient to ideas, to motives of sentiment and principle, and these motives can be of extremely different character. There is scarcely any æsthetic intention which, if logically developed, may not lead to a more or less accentuated form of realism. It is clear, however, that in the unlimited range of artistic impulses there is a region which responds more especially to the realistic trend of creative effort; just as among theories of Art there are some doctrines, the guiding principle of which is realism, and which aim at defining exactly the means of attaining to this form of artistic expression.

It is in this more precise and, in a way, specialised sense that realism during the Victorian era assumes the character of a typical and dominant tendency. What had long since been, one might say, an instinct of paramount importance in English literature, then became a theoretical and recognised necessity. The general influences of the age tended to favour the taste and search for truth in art. The example of science and the prestige of a rational philosophy gave a more methodical character to the current conception of truth—even in the sphere of art—while, at the same time, they helped to extend considerably the limits of the artist's legitimate field of work. Documentation came naturally to be regarded as a literary ideal at a time when history, and the various moral sciences, were organising themselves according to the example set by the different branches of mathe-

matical knowledge; and naturalism, that is to say, the form of realism which seeks to treat of the aspects of life voluntarily neglected by traditional spiritualism, would also naturally make its appearance in an intellectual atmosphere where certain forms of physical knowledge, such as biology, were daily increasing their prestige and sphere of influence.

Naturalism implies an uncompromising logic in the extension of scientific positivism to literature proper, which was beyond the spontaneous instinct of the English mind. In England such a step had more difficulties to encounter than in France, because there was less initiative in the domain of theory, while certain prejudices, or a certain regard for modesty, were more strongly antagonistic to it. The strait-laced moral exigencies of the middle classes about 1850 had too strong an influence on public opinion to allow of such an extension; and the encouraging example of France, together with the relaxing of social discipline towards the last quarter of the century, counted for much in the appearance of naturalism in Victorian England. It came late, and therefore did not affect the period here under study. From 1832 to 1875, realism in England may be said to have developed under influences almost exclusively indigenous, keeping strictly within the limits of national tradition, such, at least, as the nineteenth century had set.

The taste for realistic expression was not confined to one branch of literature; its action was perceptible even in poetry. But by a natural affinity, the novel seemed to be the instrument best suited to the effort after truth, in the study or the artistic treatment of reality.

Again, during this period many varieties of realism came into prominence, springing from psychological motives which were foreign, or even hostile, to any rational attitude in the writer. Thus, the art and poetry of the Pre-Raphaelites, the social novel of Kingsley and Mrs. Gaskell, are, in certain respects, the products of realistic tendencies; and yet, by the spirit which animates them, they must be classed among the expressions of the idealistic revival. But among all the varieties of realism, there is one great group, relatively interconnected, which by virtue of its size, its interest, and its value as a symptom, takes a place of primal importance; it is that in which the desire for accuracy, stimulated by what is newest and keenest in the atmosphere of

the time, claims as its justification the pleasure or the contentment inherent in the search for truth.

Although the realistic novel is not the most brilliant or the most inspiring province of Victorian literature, it is the one in which all the various spiritual influences in this synthetic age are combined according to the most characteristic formula. At the time when science and feeling are either at war with each other, or seeking to be reconciled, when a strong desire for moral balance is endeavouring to effect such a reconciliation, the novel of George Eliot takes its place between the opposite poles of evolutionary philosophy on the one hand, and the idealism of the heart on the other; though much closer to the former, it traces, as it were, a resultant line between those conflicting forces. Victorian literature has many extreme forms; if it had a point which could be termed central, and typical, that point would be found in the work of the writer just named.

2. *Thackeray.*—As far as can be judged, the realism of Thackeray[1] owes nothing to the influence of science or of philosophy. The air he breathes is charged with the diffuse positivism of a utilitarian age, but he never quotes it in support of his opinions; indeed, by his intentions and his conscious ideas, he would rather seem to be its avowed enemy. Between his guiding

[1] William Makepeace Thackeray, born in 1811 near Calcutta, was the son of an employee of the East India Company; left India in 1817 for the southwest of England; studied at Charterhouse and Cambridge; visited Weimar and Paris, where he interested himself in painting; lost his fortune and lived by his wits as a journalist and caricaturist; returned to England in 1837 and published under various pseudonyms (Yellowplush, Gahagan, Solomons, Titmarsh, etc.) in *Fraser's Magazine, The New Monthly*, etc., critical articles, fantasies, short tales and novels: *Catherine*, 1839-40; *A Shabby-Genteel Story*, 1840; *The Paris Sketch-Book*, 1840; *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond*, 1841; *The Fitz-Boodle Papers* and *Men's Wives*, 1842-43; *The Irish Sketch-Book*, 1843; *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*, 1844; in *Punch*, of recent foundation, he published *The History of the Next French Revolution*, 1844; *Jeames's Diary*, 1845-46; *The Snobs of England, by One of Themselves*, 1846-47 (*The Book of Snobs*, 1848); *Mr. Punch's Prize Novelists*, 1847, etc. He also signed himself Titmarsh in the series of Christmas Books (*Mrs. Perkins's Ball*, *Our Street*, etc.), 1847-57. But he employed his own name in *Vanity Fair* (a serial, 1847-48); *The History of Pendennis*, 1848-50; *The History of Henry Esmond*, 1852; *The Newcomes*, 1853-55; *The Virginians*, 1857-59; *Lovel the Widower*, 1860; *The Adventures of Philip*, 1861-62; he left unfinished *Denis Duval*, 1864. His two series of lectures, *The English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century*, were published in 1853; *The Four Georges*, 1855-56, appeared in 1860. The success of *Vanity Fair* placed him with Dickens in the front rank of writers, an honour which was his until his death in 1863. *Works*, ed. by Ritchie, 1898-99; ed. by Saintsbury, 1908. See the biography by Melville, 1910; studies by Trollope (English Men of Letters), 1879; Merivale and Marzials (Great Writers), 1891; Whibley, 1903; N. W. Stephenson (*Spiritual Drama in Life of Thackeray*), 1913; L. Melville, 1928.

impulse and the spirit which governs the researches of a scholar, one can find only certain general analogies, such as the same need for clear-sightedness, and the same distrust of all that prejudice or sentiment has called up and interposed between our eyes and the facts of life. One side of his nature is in reaction against Romanticism, sentimental illusion, and the half-conscious deceit of imagination. He is thus virtually in harmony with a decisive return, on the part of literature and thought, to an ideal of reason and lucidity.

But this is the effect of a wholly instinctive preference. Thackeray's mind has developed according to the law of his temperament. By birth he is essentially a realist, just as others are born visionaries, or gifted with a strong sense of feeling. His preferences are supported by maxims and grounded on precedents; but this effort can scarcely be said to have brought him nearer George Eliot, or directed his thoughts towards the future. It is the past which attracts him, the tradition of the eighteenth century. He is against a popularised and cheap Romanticism, and rather aims at joining the long line of sensible, self-possessed writers who, before the frenzied outburst of the last generation, had known how to live and think and write in harmony with themselves and the world. Just as Fielding took his stand over against Richardson, so Thackeray stands for the open and fair good sense in human nature, contrasted with a vulgarised form of Byronism.

These traits become prominent at an early date in Thackeray's life. Already in his university days he is trying his skill in parody. The ten years just preceding the publication of *Vanity Fair* are occupied with a whole series of youthful writings, hastily composed, varied in subject and of very unequal merit, but including certain parts which are really superior. Their almost only source is the easy spontaneity of the author's ironical verve. As with Fielding, affectation in all its forms is here aimed at: sentimentalism, social vanity, the false philanthropy which brings into fashion virtuous murderers, the literary pretensions of a Bulwer, the ambitious pride of a Disraeli. There is a mischievous touch in his observation of human follies, and, both as a writer and as a caricaturist, he knows how to bring them into relief. Scattered about, and published under various pseudonyms, this long series did not help in establishing the immediate reputation of its

author. *Vanity Fair* had to appear before the general public became acquainted with his name. But in those early pages he had served his apprenticeship; he had learnt the art of constructing a tale, of sketching a character, of writing in a style at once simple, natural, and of the happiest spontaneity.

The themes of these essays can be grouped round three centres: conventional Romanticism, still lingering in the novel and melodrama; national idiosyncrasies, traceable in most cases to a naïve blindness, and to a total ignorance as regards one's fellow-men, together with a wrong interpretation of one's group; finally, and in all the range of its various shades, snobbery or the false estimation of social values. All these separate provinces belong to one and the same empire, that of insincerity, whose vast expanse had already been explored by Fielding.

At this date Thackeray is not a literary critic who takes himself very seriously, and it would be unjust to call him to account for his opinions, several of which are extremely superficial. The value of his early sallies resides in his very fine sense of the lie at the core of some mediocre writings, or in the mechanical skill which repeats and over-emphasises the effect of the great masters. When Thackeray assumes the part of critic of the French mind, as in the *Paris Sketch Book,* or of Irish character, as in the *Irish Sketch Book,* his weaknesses are patent. Despite his sympathy for France, he cannot quite rid himself of British prejudice, and in scoffing at the infatuation of his French hosts he incidentally betrays his own. Again, although he warmly appreciates Irish good-humour, he does not go to the length of accepting, on its own value, or as having equal claims to consideration, the moral originality of a different people. But he cannot be held as altogether responsible for his opinions in sketches such as these, which were written from day to day and without any general plan. Whatever their limitations, they reveal the mind of an inquiring observer, of a talented journalist, of a psychologist who displays no great depth and is certainly not infallible, but is endowed with a gift of amused, or already saddened, penetration.

When Thackeray takes up the task of satirising snobbery, he finds himself on favourite ground, and the quality of his work becomes appreciably stronger. From the beginning, he had always felt keenly the weakness of human character, when confronted with the claims of conventionality. His comic invention

had led him to take pleasure in upsetting the sacred order of things; he had considered society, customs, and even intellectual works, from the standpoint of a valet, Yellowplush; and his hero writes in a language full of the drollest of mistakes, but one feels that the irreverence has a sting. *The Book of Snobs* is made up of chapters brought together without much of a general plan, and it has obvious faults. The very notion of snobbery is somewhat vague; it gets broader and broader as the book unfolds itself; in the opening pages it represents the despicable veneration for what is hollow and false; at the end, it resolves itself into all the moral imperfection of man. Irritated by the obsession of base flattery which he sees or suspects everywhere, Thackeray attacks it with a humorous vigour which soon gives way to a bitter indignation; as in the case of Swift, his reprobation seems to ignore all bounds, and develops into an arraignment of humanity as a whole. No longer differentiating between a self-interested humility on the one hand, and vital utilitarianism on the other, the satirist proceeds to denounce the insignificant acts of beings who awaken our pity rather than our ire. And no doubt here we have the effect of a theme that has been worked upon to the point of satiety, without any deliberate purpose or thought-out measure. To give unqualified approval to the views of the author, one might say, would be to proclaim oneself a misanthrope and a revolutionary. But they take full effect against a meanness too subtly interwoven with social life for the man of the world to detest it sincerely, as is clearly shown by the hidden uneasiness perceptible in many of the judgments passed upon it.

Vanity Fair, Pendennis, The Newcomes, give full scope to the personality of the novelist. He appears to be very great, although as an artist he is incomplete. The first of these three novels is probably the best, in that it reveals all the writer's qualities while keeping his faults in the background. The other two have their moments of more subdued inspiration, which may win for them the suffrages of many; Colonel Newcome holds a warm place in the affection of English readers, justified no doubt by the splendid portrait he offers of the gentleman, but also explainable by the not irrelevant suggestion that he satisfies the desire for a sympathetic hero. The fact remains, however, that *Vanity Fair*, despite its occasional failings, and the looser construction of the second part, has a strength and a sureness of

creative touch which stamp it as the decisive work of a writer who, once, gives full expression to his genius.

And this genius is more robust and many-sided than could have been expected from all that an ironical and somewhat fickle temperament seemed to hold in promise. The hostile attitude which Thackeray adopted towards Romanticism and sentimentality betrays its secret cause: the presence in the depths of his nature of a repressed Romanticism, a bitterness in which the disappointment of his feelings unites with the revelations of a clear-sighted intelligence. Through his deep and painful realisation of the mediocrity of souls, and of the low level of all but a few characters, Thackeray comes to feel a mood akin to the desires and aspirations of the Romanticists, without being able or willing to yield to it wholly.

Realism, therefore, with Thackeray is prompted not by a detached curiosity, but by an emotional interest, which is much less cynical than it is impassioned. He is undoubtedly a seeker after truth; but truth is cruel, and it is in vain that the perception of this cruelty tries to hide itself; it continually breaks out. If one examines the fascination which attracts the analyst in Thackeray to probe the sore parts of human nature, one finds that there is in it an intellectual taste for sincerity, and also an impatience with all lies, coloured already by a touch of sensitiveness and personal feeling—a grudge against the illusion of which he himself has been a victim, some anger against art that is superficial, cowardly, and cannot or does not wish to see; and finally, that secret, deep delight in what is sad, that preference for all that savours of hopefulness, that love of evil, all of which really constitute a state of Romantic sensibility. The clear-sightedness which Thackeray displays in the first two hundred pages of *Vanity Fair* is as deadly as it is admirable; it is plain that he could not remain at this level of absolute frankness if he wanted his public to follow him; and, in order that it might do so, he came down. The subconscious workings of love of self, the delicate ramifications of egoism spreading through all human feelings, the skill and force of that inner demoniacal power which substitutes our own interest for the noble or honest intentions in which our clear consciousness takes pride, have never been dissected with such passionate eagerness. Only Swift had written thus in England; and although Smollett evinced the same bitter-

ness, he had much less penetrative skill. At the end of the nineteenth century, moral criticism, with Butler and Shaw, was to display the same fearless courage; but their vision, compared with that of Thackeray, remains distinctly calm; his irony throbs with passion even in his most collected moments. And when Meredith, in his turn, will come to search the heart of his "Egoist," he will bring to his task a power of soaring poetry, the sovereign freedom of the comic spirit, whose light rapture will serve to mitigate his rancour.

Are there not any of our fellow-beings who can lay claim to our sympathy? Undoubtedly there are, and *Vanity Fair* affords several examples of such. A clear-sighted analysis of souls allows of a certain indulgence, or of a feeling of disillusioned tenderness towards some of them; but it is incompatible with the mental outlook in which the conventional novel delights. In these pages of Thackeray there are no heroes; at the most a Dobbin, chivalrous but dull, a faithful dog to those he protects and saves, and who repay his services with ingratitude; an Amelia, loving, passive, always in the background; for true heroism and affection are by no means clothed in all the beauty which our naïve desire for symbols lends to them; and if we were to be shown these virtues as they really are, few, if any, would recognise them in their mediocre garb. Life never offers a gem of pure water which Nature has cut in advance.

The complexity of things as they are puts other impediments in the way of the simple exigencies of a facile idealism. Becky Sharp cannot be ranked as a heroine, for the reason that she is exactly the opposite. But is it not true that, just as the author himself, we all in turn feel her ascendancy? Might it not be that art and life seem to oppose the absolute application of any moral category? Or does Becky perchance stand for a courage and elasticity of mind which have a value in themselves, and which it would be foolish to class according to a scale of virtues and vices? It belongs to the essence of this novel to bring these questions forward, even if the author is unable to answer them. Nor does he attempt to do so; for the reason, perhaps, that he is not sufficiently sure of his own deeper mind; and he is himself, in every respect, a divided soul.

Carried away, as it were, by his creation of Becky, he gives her such wonderful reality that she dominates not only the novel,

but also the whole of his work. Never has there been a more thorough study of the instinctive trickery, the inherent duplicity, the supple energy of a certain type of the eternal woman—the actress, the adventuress who scandalises and conquers the world, invincible in her defeats, insecure in her triumphs. In what regards her, Thackeray's realism, intuitional at bottom, possesses an extraordinary force. But though it is carried to great length, it is limited by a remnant of sentimentalism, or by the respect which the writer still fosters for the demands of the public; the result is that Becky's fate does not differ from that of the other personages of Thackeray; it works itself out by a sort of edifying justice in the manner of Hogarth. Her career becomes an illustration of the rise and downfall of the courtesan. All this, of course, is suggested rather than actually exemplified, because the ban under which public opinion had placed certain subjects was as yet almost absolute.

The hesitancy which colours the art of Thackeray is here apparent. Influenced in one direction by certain tendencies, and at the same time attracted by others of an opposite nature, it cannot quite decide its choice. In many respects the guiding spirit in this realistic work is the need of tender emotion, as with Dickens. While the action of the story may seem to avoid traditional conclusions, in the end it comes to favour them. At the same time as Thackeray has a liking for cruel truth, he has a yearning love for kindness, and even advocates its merits. At first the plot unfolds itself very logically, emanates, so to speak, from the characters themselves; but, when a hundred and one providential happenings intervene, it very soon loses its firm outline. On the whole it is so long and complicated, so mingled with extraneous elements—in the present case entire episodes borrowed from recent history—the trend of thought is interrupted by so many digressions and moral reflections, that the work, when viewed at one glance, seems very loosely put together. And this applies also to *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes.*

In another direction, again, Thackeray selects his materials quite as much as he submits to facts. His descriptive painting of social surroundings is strong and vivid, rich in detail, of a less intense quality than that of Dickens, and more faithful to average truth; yet it is far from being objective. If realism can be defined as pursuing an ideal which, indeed, is chimerical—a kind of

scientific faithfulness in the reproduction of facts—then Thackeray *is hardly a realist. While he is precise in delineation, he* brings out the picturesque elements of every scene, the pathos or the humour of every situation; the field of possibility is marked out into arbitrary provinces in accordance with his personal experience, and his pen-pictures of society are most openly incomplete. *There is no desire on his part to make his investigations* either methodical or documentary.

While Thackeray in his work shows himself the grim psychologist of the "vanity" of human sentiment, another leading impulse with him is that of historical imagination; a duality of talent *which is in every way characteristic of the man, because* he is as much a poet as an analyst. From the point of view of art, *Henry Esmond* is the best of his books; here the atmosphere is that of the classical period, and the joy of living through the mind in an age—that of Queen Anne—the manners and spirit *of which he loved, stimulates and guides his inventive powers,* suggesting and strengthening a definite unity of tone. In this story, as serene and restrained in its moments of emotion as in those of quiet amusement, there is a grave harmony which can be described as a success in delicate and refined impressionism. *The book possesses great merit in the construction of certain* characters, as well as in the picture it traces of a past epoch in history; at the same time, it has its weak points, such as the inability of the writer to cut away what is only accessory, and keep severely to the main lines of the plot. But when compared *with The Virginians which followed it, it seems more closely knit* together. And in spite of the more open incursions of the author into the literature or the history of the eighteenth century (*The English Humorists, The Four Georges,* etc.), *Esmond* retains all its superiority, because in a novel literary criticism and the *reconstruction of* facts are not subject to the same technical demands.

We feel, however, with Thackeray that he has not realised his genius to the full. He never took thoroughly in hand either his life or his work; even when he was a respectable and famous writer, he kept a little of the Bohemian in him He has left no book which can be described as perfect. Artist though he is, with the pen and with the pencil, it is by his art—the organisation and elaboration of form—that he stands open to the injuries of time.

But his temperament shows qualities of supreme originality; and when he is at his best he cannot be rivalled. The satirist, the humorist, the novelist in Thackeray, all have their individual and uncommon traits; when combined, they go to form a personality as rich as it is charming; but when Thackeray becomes the cruel and sad psychologist of the heart, the realistic painter of the emotions, he brings a new and unique contribution to the literature of England.

3. *Trollope, Reade, Wilkie Collins, etc.*—Between Thackeray and George Eliot a series of minor novelists manifest the continuance of the spirit of realism. This spirit develops and gains precision under the general influences of an age which is above all intellectual and positive. On the one hand, it tends with Trollope and Reade towards the ideal of strict documentation; on the other, with Reade and Wilkie Collins, towards an ideal—to all appearances quite the opposite—of sensational intensity. These two elements, bound together by certain psychological and literary affinities, were later to be fused with each other under the influence of French naturalism, and lead to the quest for a truth at once objective and startling.

There is to be noted in the art of Trollope [1] a rather delicate shade of difference. The main part of his work is a series of novels, limited in scope, which treat of a small provincial town, and of the ecclesiastical world in the shadow of its cathedral—including as well glimpses of the fuller social life of the surroundings. All this is described with precision and piquancy, in a rather uniform colouring, by a writer who is at once painstaking and methodical, and who prides himself upon the possession of such qualities. One could be tempted into believing that this work is a first draft of what will later develop into monographs

[1] Anthony Trollope (1815-82), an official in the postal service, wrote novels with a methodical regularity, which he has depicted not without some complacency; the great success of *The Warden* (1855) encouraged him to develop the same theme in a series: *Barchester Towers*, 1857; *Doctor Thorne*, 1859; *Framley Parsonage*, 1867; *The Small House at Allington*, 1864; *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, 1867; he tried his hand at the political novel (*Phineas Finn*, 1869, etc.); and the problem novel (*The Vicar of Bullhampton*, 1870), but here with less success; his *Autobiography* is useful to consult (1883). He also contributed a study of Thackeray to the English Men of Letters series in 1879. *The Barsetshire Novels*, Introduction by Frederic Harrison, 1906. See Saintsbury, *Corrected Impressions*, 1875; Sir Leslie Stephen, *Studies of a Biographer*, vol. iv., 1902; T. H. S. Escott, *Anthony Trollope, His Works, Associates, and Literary Originals*, 1913; Saintsbury, *Trollope Revisited*, 1920; Hugh Walpole, *Anthony Trollope* (English Men of Letters), 1928.

on professional or local subjects, born from a doctrinal realism. In fact, Trollope had no preconceived plan of writing; he did not possess any particular knowledge of Church circles; and his portraits, like his pictures of daily life and habits, are really the results of intuition and conjecture, rather than a photographic reproduction of what he saw.

And yet it is not wrong to rank him with the realists. He works up data in which pure observation, the passive registering of facts, does not occupy a foremost place. Nevertheless, we owe to his creative talent scenes and personages of a likelihood which is, in the field of art, equal, if not superior, to actual reality. All his methods tend to give an impression of average truth. As the neutralised image of the world, conceived by one who thinks clearly and whose powers of vision are devoid of originality, the miniature society Trollope depicts has few extremes; pathos and humour are not lacking in it, but they are subdued and controlled. *As to the accuracy and immediacy of his reproductive talent, he* has deceived competent judges; he instinctively aimed at a certain quality in art, and attained to it by his own means. He possessed the essence of realism, which consists in the inner intention of the artist first, and concerns his technique only in the second instance.

The case of Charles Reade [1] is different. Not only was he a realist by temperament, but also by method, and to a degree of conscientiousness and system that had as yet been unequalled in England. He described his habits and rules; and, a few years later, they were to be those of Zola, who formed them independently. Accordingly to the documentary formula, a novelist is a compiler who gathers together, against future use, all that experience has revealed on various situations and problems. He borrows from personal observation, but above all, from the organs in which are registered the current happenings of everyday existence: newspapers, magazines, technical reports, accounts of law court proceedings. In this way, Reade believes, reality can be caught with infallible certainty, since it is "snapped," so to speak, in its natural state, and before it has been elaborated and

[1] [illegible] wrote dramas (*Gold*, 1853; *Drink*, adapted from the [illegible] ly novels; *Peg Woffington*, 1853; *Christie John*[illegible] [illegible] to Mend, 1856; *Jack of All Trades*, 1858, *The* [illegible] d Cash, 1863; *Griffith Gaunt*, 1866, *Put Your*[illegible] [illegible] le Temptation, 1871, etc. See Charles L. and [illegible] a *Memoir*, etc., 1887.

more or less modified by the spirit of generalisation or moralising. This was the plan which he put into practice. All his work is built upon facts. Whether he treats of the Middle Ages or his own epoch, whether he seeks to appeal to our emotions or only to add to our knowledge, he will not state anything unless he is positively sure of what he says. This is a common feature of his writing, be it the historical novel, *The Cloister and the Hearth,* or the novels with a social purpose, such as *Hard Cash* and *Put Yourself in His Place,* or the novels of adventure in the category of *Jack of All Trades.* They owe it some sort of unity.

Charles Reade has serious merits. He knows how to tell a story, to create the impression of fatality and of the interdependence of causes. His dramatic episodes—to which the precise delineation of detail, and the strong yet restrained imaginative colouring of the narration, impart some of the vividness of reality—are moving enough. However, his philanthropic arguments leave us indifferent; aiming, as they do, at very particular cases of abuse, they become too documentary and loaded with circumstantial detail to rouse emotion. They convince us, but they lack that stimulating warmth of feeling which Dickens, whose arguments are less solid, knew better how to suggest. In Reade's work, which is of so varied a nature, the most living pages might be found in *The Cloister and the Hearth,* an ambitious study of the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renascence, certainly eloquent, though often over-estimated; and mostly in *Griffith Grant* or *A Terrible Temptation,* where the handling of psychological and pathological "cases" is carried out with a strength of touch, a spirit of boldness and a disregard of certain traditional reserves, through which his realism reaches the actual quality of French "naturalisme."

The work of Wilkie Collins[1] enables us to seize an intermediary movement of similar import; this, on the one hand, is connected with the ever-increasing severity of realism, and, on the other, with a reviving need of emotional expression, which prepared the way for what was going to be a new Romantic literature. Collins brought into fashion the sensational tale, in which the mechanical plotting of a crime is ingeniously and elaborately

[1] Wilkie Collins (1824-89): *The Woman in White,* 1860; *No Name,* 1862; *The Moonstone,* 1868, etc. See *Letters of Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins,* 1892; Phillips, *Dickens, Reade, Collins, Sensation Novelists,* 1919.

worked out. Dickens in the novels of his later years showed the same tendency; his *Edwin Drood* is a well-known example. Collins in his work combines the feeling of terror and the art of creating an atmosphere of intense, imaginary anguish, with a meticulous care in the manipulation of his facts, and an accurate use of technical knowledge. The revival of adventure in all its forms, and the singular success of the contemporary detective novel, are thus adumbrated; but no less apparent is an ever bolder search for literary effects in the violent aspects of reality, and in the emotional appeal of life's untold possibilities. A certain kind of the supernatural, which finds its source in the exceptional accidents of human experiences, and sets the whole nervous system on edge, completes and crowns the efforts of realism, while leaving it behind and even including its contradiction.[1]

4. *George Eliot.*—George Eliot[2] is a writer whose fame is menaced. She is a victim of the discredit which opinion to-day throws upon her generation, and which will pass with time.

[1] [illegible] (1803-73), a versatile writer, less original [illegible] fashions for three-quarters of a century; [illegible] was uncertain and confused (*The Cax-* [illegible] *He Do with It?* 1858). He also wrote novels dealing with social problems, where he is more the clever than the moving writer: *Paul Clifford*, 1830; *Eugene Aram*, 1832; historical novels: *The Last Days of Pompeii*, 1834; *Rienzi*, 1835, *The Last of the Barons*, 1843; *Harold*, 1848, dramas: *Richelieu*, 1838; *The Lady of Lyons*, 1838; novels of terror and of the supernatural: *Zanoni*, 1844; *The Haunted and the Haunters*, 1859; *A Strange Story*, 1862. Nothing in his work is more sincere than his *Pelham*, 1828, the study of a type of dandy who was the rage of the time, or *The Coming Race*, 1871, where the picture is that of a kind of Utopia which resembles in several points the *Erewhon* of Butler. If his popularity was in any way the gauge of his value, Lytton would rank as a great writer of his day. At the same time he merits something better than mere indifference. See his biography by Lytton (V. A. G. R.), 1913.

[2] Mary Ann Evans, born in 1819 in Warwickshire, a keen student, gave herself a varied education, frequented the centres of advanced thought, translated the *Leben Jesu* of Strauss (1846), the *Essence of Christianity* of Feuerbach (1854); collaborated in the *Westminster Review*, knew Spencer, and Lewes whose life she shared and who encouraged her to write works of imagination. She published, under the name of George Eliot, novels: *Scenes of Clerical Life* (in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1857; in a volume, 1858), which had a great success; *Adam Bede*, 1859; *The Mill on the Floss*, 1860; *Silas Marner*, 1861, *Romola*, 1863, *Felix Holt the Radical*, 1866; *Middlemarch*, 1871-72; *Daniel Deronda*, 1876; poems: *The Spanish Gipsy*, 1868; *The Legend of Jubal*, etc., 1874; essays: *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, 1879, etc. After the death of Lewes (1878) she married J. W. Cross, and died the same year, 1880. Her corresopndence was utilised by her husband for her biography (*Life and Letters*, 1885). *Works*, Warwick ed., 1901-3. See study by M. Blind, 1883; Cooke, 1883; C. Thomson, 1901; L. Stephen (English Men of Letters), 1902; Olcott, 1911; Gardner (*Inner Life of George Eliot*), 1912; Deakin (*Early Life of George Eliot*), 1913; M. L. Cazamian (*Le Roman et les Idées en Angleterre*), 1923, S. Pfeiffer, *George Eliots Beziehungen zu Deutschland*, 1925; E. S. Haldane, *George Eliot and Her Times*, 1927; A. Paterson, *George Eliot's Family Life and Letters*, 1928.

Graver, however, are the reasons for disfavour which concern her personally. The upholders of tradition have never forgiven her bold ventures in philosophic thought, nor excused that act in her life which, though it agreed with the ethics of the heart, jarred with the principles admitted by custom. Critical spirits, or lovers of pure art, are not without resenting either the moderation of her thought, or the weightiness which her intellectuality often gives her prose. Some have always looked upon her with mistrust, while many would be tempted to think that she was too prudent in her opinions. Even among her admirers, there are few who do not find in her work a faint suspicion of heaviness. In the study of her novels, therefore, one must keep oneself immune from a prejudiced hostility which, undoubtedly, is unjust, and at the same time not be influenced by the intemperate zeal which might awake from the feeling that one was pleading a cause.

It is perhaps best to divide her work into two parts. There is no question of leaving the first entirely aside, although very probably much of it must be given up. George Eliot had of necessity to pay for the crisis which brought about her emancipation, which raised her from the status of a young country girl to be the equal of the most scholarly minds of her time, and transformed the daughter of Puritan parents into a pupil of Spencer and Comte. Her independence, won after a long and strenuous struggle, was to leave its mark upon her for life. It gave her a taste for discussion, awakened the desire in her to explain her own conduct, or that of the beings she created, in the most explicit and logical manner; it inspired her with the familiar love and respect of formulated principles. All the intellectuality and fondness for reasoning which seemed to be part and parcel of her very being, deprived or tended to deprive her of a certain happy spontaneity, afforded her less scope for the play of instinct, and made purely artistic creation less natural to her, while rendering more natural the painstaking efforts of artificial labour. Since her vocation was to write, and to be a novelist, she did much during the first thirty years of her life to direct what was to be her gift of invention towards lucid and dry forms of expression.

Although her imaginative resources were thus impoverished, she gained in other respects. There is always a strengthening virtue in the conquest of one's own personality. The moral

nobility of her inner development with its honesty of purpose, its courageous determination, not only lent a deeper spiritual quality to her thought, but imparted to all that she wrote a fragrance of ardent sincerity which compensates for many failings of her æsthetic judgment.

Thus it can be said that her realism was conscious and systematic; all the gifts of her intellectual culture contributed to it, while in it the influence of science, which she had thoroughly imbibed, is everywhere manifest. She had made a study of history as of exegesis; she was acquainted with the psychology of the Utilitarians, and had accepted the doctrine of evolution as soon as it was first explained. As an inevitable result of the mental discipline of her youth, she felt the need of precision and objectivity, and dwelt upon the idea that any object of study, no matter what it be, has its own infinite value. The construction of her novels, the substance of her analyses, and much of her imagery, recall this scientific schooling of her thought. But realism to her is much more than a mere method, or even an intellectual necessity; it is an emotion and a creed, and this she has explained with perfect clearness. All the modest virtues and vices of humble folks, however mediocre or disgraced they may be by nature, become attractively interesting to her, and the source of this interest is love. Her words ring with the supreme appeal of a common brotherhood and common sufferings; and whatever stress she may lay on the solidarity between men which Nature enforces and which intelligence comes to recognise, her ethical beliefs spring from that spontaneous gift of the heart: sympathy.

It is no easy task, therefore, to divide what is fresh and natural in her work from what remains dry and lifeless, or rather to distinguish between the causes which give rise to these conflicting elements. Besides, they are often combined. The most barren wastes in her prose are not without some oases, just as the vistas of refreshing green are broken by flat stretches of stony dreariness. But, upon the whole, a great number of her arguments, of her intentions, and most of the expressions which these naturally called forth, are more directly related, no doubt, to dialectics than to poetry, in the sense in which every artist is a poet. The bare framework of her ideas is often too much in evidence; not infrequently, the situations and characters allow the reader a glimpse of the inner architecture which backs and

supports them; and her style, through many a page, through whole chapters and episodes, has the indefinable quality that suggests a lesson in psychology, ethics or history.

The value of the philosophy imparted in the deliberate teaching of George Eliot's novels, and the literary intentions which she enunciates most openly, have and will retain their particular merit, even if we prefer to find in other parts of her work its most precious assets and its most vital interest. In *Adam Bede* she expounds the doctrine granting each of us the initiative which works out our moral and religious destiny; *The Mill on the Floss* is devoted to a study of the collaboration of character with circumstances in the fulfilment of fate; *Silas Marner* treats of all the hidden forces which shape man's personality through the contact of his fellows; the subject of *Felix Holt* is the prominent part played by the education of the individual in any matter dealing with social reform, etc. Such are the main themes of the novels; but there are others which form, so to speak, the background, and which are really of deeper significance as well as more substantial: the interdependence of all human beings; the intricate workings of consequence which propagate the influence of a given act, for good or for evil, beyond our visible horizon, in ever-widening circles; and more especially, the pathetic quality of the most common human emotions.

All this, undoubtedly, has its value. But this doctrine is not transmuted completely enough into the silent preconceptions of creative imagination itself; it is not sufficiently dissolved into the plastic elements of her art; it remains a doctrine, asserting and expressing itself as such. And it is just in these avowed assertions that the weakness of George Eliot's work is to be found. Similarly, the laboured exertions of her will have added no supreme achievement to her fictions. The scholarly historical setting of *Romola* may be estimable, but it leaves us cold; *Daniel Deronda* is a strong but unsuccessful attempt, because it is almost entirely artificial. Even in the most vigorous and spontaneous among her novels, there are passages, and features, which explain these partial failures.

The other part of her work bears the stamp of true inspiration. It is not less rich in persuasive ideas, for it breathes the communicative ardour of fraternal sympathy, the keen and kindly perception of the inner life of souls, and a powerful sense of that

hard-worn heroic virtue, to the height of which we all have, some time or other, to rise. All the doctrine of George Eliot is here, implied in the very facts of her stories. But at the same time it allows of artistic creation, and even expresses itself through it. *The touching Scenes of Clerical Life*, almost the whole of *Adam Bede*, much of *Silas Marner*, the main part of *The Mill on the Floss* and *Middlemarch*, belong to this order of spontaneous and concrete invention. It is more than enough to guarantee the fame of a great writer.

For in works such as these there is a livening and animating force at the base of the writer's art. From her experience of life, from her knowledge of self, or from an intuitive revelation, she draws the material for an imaginary world, which has in it the essence of reality. And this world is ample enough to allow for all possible contrasts, and call forth smiling amusement as well as loving compassion; it can even arouse a feeling of angry irony. The humour of George Eliot is not the least of her qualities; it is a salutary and pleasing element, which introduces an invigorating freshness into her prose. More often of a tender, playful, even delicate nature, it grows satirical at times, and acquires then a sharp edge which contradicts, as in the portrait of the Dodsons (*The Mill on the Floss*), the general lesson of sympathy; but none among her readers will object to this. The study of Mrs. Poyser in *Adam Bede* is an unalloyed source of joy; in *Silas Marner* there are lively scenes of rural realism.

The world in which the imagination of George Eliot finds itself at greatest ease is that of the provinces, the home of her early years; and, no doubt, her creative faculty is not to the same degree dramatic; she is essentially a revealer of self. But the beings she creates represent, as it were, imaginary aspects or developments of her "ego," and acquire the quality of truth by reason of this vital bond. Some are women, such as Dinah Morris (*Adam Bede*) and Dorothy (*Middlemarch*); some are men, as Amos Barton, Silas Marner, and Philip Wakem (*The Mill on the Floss*); but it is plain that they take after the authoress herself, and that her personality passes into them all.

Once, however, she has taken herself as the direct object of study, and created her masterpiece in Maggie Tulliver (*The Mill on the Floss*). The first two hundred pages of this novel are, probably, the most nearly perfect she has written; for the

faithful evocation of scenic detail as well as of popular customs, and the astonishing accuracy of the psychology, are the outcome of an immediate and infallible impulse, translating into words the ever-present vision of the past.

From *Scenes of Clerical Life* to *Middlemarch*, George Eliot is an incomparable painter of the lower circles of English provincial life, and of a whole order of souls who, simple as social values go, are nevertheless spiritually complex, torn by scruples, and by the anguish of moral conflicts. In this sphere, her art derives its value from its truth as much as from the emotional interest it creates, and indissolubly from both.

No doubt she was aware of this, or, at the end, she recognised it. Her intellectual zeal, already cautious and open to all human feelings during the years of her ardent youth, grew still more tempered, gentle, modest and tender in the course of her life. She preserved the religion of truth without retaining its dogmatism. The philosophy of *The Mill on the Floss* left ample scope to what is inexplicable, to the hazards which cannot be avoided by every upright and sincere thinker. In *Middlemarch*, the psychology tends more clearly towards an intuitive idea of mind and consciousness. Her most powerful novel, even if it is not the most inspired or the most harmoniously constructed, is the last in which the activity of her courageous, ever-moving mind has been expressed in terms of scenes and figures familiar to herself, and thus endowed with artistic reality.

To be consulted: E. Bouvier, *La Bataille réaliste*, 1914; Brunetière, *Le Roman naturaliste*, 1884; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. xiii. chaps. ix. xi. xiii.; M. L. Cazamian, *Roman et Idées en Angleterre*, 1923; J. W. Cross, *Life and Letters of George Eliot*, 1885; W. L. Cross, *The Development of the English Novel*, 1899; David-Sauvageot, *Le Réalisme et le Naturalisme dans la Littérature et l'Art*, 1890; Elton, *Survey of English Literature, 1830-80*, 1920; Phelps, *Advance of English Novel*, 1919; Phillips, *Dickens, Reade, Collins, Sensation Novelists*, 1919; F. T. Russell, *Satire in the Victorian Novel*, 1920; Sadleir, *Excursions in Victorian Bibliography*, 1922; Saintsbury, *Trollope Revisited*, 1920; Walker, *The Literature of the Victorian Era*, 1910.

BOOK VII

NEW DIVERGENCIES (1875-1914)

CHAPTER I

THE CHANGE IN LITERARY THOUGHT: CAUSES AND CHARACTERISTICS

The years 1875-1880 correspond to a turning-point in the history of English literature, as well as in the very life of England. About this time should be placed the beginning of a new period—the last whose development is fully known to us. It can be considered as ending with the outbreak of the Great War—a deep-felt influence, cutting through all the strands of reality, and with an effect which, at the present day, is still incalculable.

The causes and the features of that change can be summed up, due stress being laid on social circumstances, but making due allowance for the inner rhythm of the mind, whose pulsation remains perceptible, even if it becomes weaker with the reciprocal penetration of its phases.

The third quarter of the nineteenth century—the period from 1850 to 1875—had been for Great Britain an era of unequalled prosperity. A wave of optimism, and of trust in the future of the country, had risen in consequence. A national culture so obviously in a state of equilibrium both within itself, and with the conditions of its foreign surroundings, might well entertain the feeling of its own value. This age, the main body and stronghold of the Victorian era, is a static epoch. After 1875, under repeated and various shocks, that equilibrium is destroyed or weakened; its place is taken by a feeling of instability. Set loose again, the tendencies which had been for a time gathered into a powerful synthesis make their diverging trend once more felt. With the last quarter of the century, the Victorian spirit

obscurely loses its self-confidence; and meanwhile, the need of a spiritual renovation appears and forces itself upon the national consciousness. Whatever may be the chronological sequence of these two facts—and their roots are too much entangled for such an order to be perceptible—they show themselves as simultaneous, and intimately connected. A third fact is soon added to them: thus growing again more flexible, and therefore more susceptible of impressions, the English literary temperament becomes more open to foreign intellectual movements; it welcomes more readily some influences from abroad.

The breakdown of confidence is the outcome of a crisis in prosperity. British industries are hurt or threatened by the competition of younger nations. The export trade ceases to grow. As a whole, the economic activity of the country shows a decline; this reacts on the condition of the working classes; unemployment and poverty are on the increase; strikes, as a result, grow more numerous; a chronic feeling of unrest sets in, and socialism, which since 1850 has practically disappeared, again is seen as an active force. From this time forth, however brilliant may be the triumphs achieved by English energy in the field of production and trade, a golden age, and the happy expectation of easy victories, are past and gone. This dim anxiety is widespread in the atmosphere of the century drawing to its end; its image is mirrored, in a thousand ways, by all the moods of thought. The anguish and the conquests of the South African war, the coming to a head of the feeling of Empire, stimulate that uneasiness much more than they allay it.

The craving for a renovation, on the other hand, seems to act independently, according to its own principle. It assumes various expressions, which may appear contradictory, but are in fact harmoniously related and connected. Those tendencies most quickly and decisively assert themselves which during the previous period were, at least relatively, restrained and repressed. In spite of the exuberant revolts of idealism, the Victorian age, at the stage of its full growth, had found its central aim in the search for balance through reason; it had been before everything intellectual and positively minded. The age which succeeds it is thus bound to witness a Romantic revival, although the special aspect, the individual shades, and the original quality of this Romanticism cannot be known in advance.

The spiritual structure of the new period reveals itself first through the self-assertion of *sensibility on several lines. Feeling*, no longer accepting to be bound by the various sets of rules which had severely restrained it, rebels against them, and tends to set itself up as the sufficient or the sovereign principle of thought and life. The philosophy and the literature of the declining century are filled with an impassioned revolt against science. The rational study of things, as a method, has not justified the hopes which it had raised, or which had gathered round it, without its taking actual responsibility for them; it has not given man the material and moral happiness which had been naïvely expected of it. On the contrary, it has destroyed or dried up *some of the fountain-heads of joy; it has struck out sources of* bitterness yet unknown. Rationalism meanwhile, hated and denounced as it is by impatient angry spirits, faces the rebellion of instinct with a still unperturbed equanimity; it feels itself proof against the direct onslaughts of its adversaries. But now the citadel is turned. The creative activities of the mind are no longer willing to follow that narrow sunken road which imperious logic, from a position of vantage, overlooks and commands. Another way is discovered; more direct and easy at first, it then crosses unexplored regions, where errors and doubts are lurking, and cause sudden alarms; but it opens up virgin territories, in which abundant wealth lies hidden. In an endeavour to conquer spiritual freedom, the rights of intuition are proclaimed; mysticism revives in all its forms; and philosophy, ethics, art, at one through the working of a secret psychological affinity, readily contribute to the making of a new Romanticism.

Imagination was being emancipated at the same time. Victorian rationalism no doubt had not spurned its aid, but had treated it as a mere assistant. Now it assumes authority in its turn. With rapturous joy, the spirit of adventure reawakens; the unknown, the beyond, are again invested with the attraction which they had possessed to such a degree three-quarters of a century earlier, and of which they had been robbed for a time by the ambition, the assurance of knowing and understanding all. The feeling of the mysterious side of things is no longer repressed; it is accepted, and even sought for its own sake. Day-dreams are now a permissible means of refreshment for the soul, *a means of knowledge even; conduct itself can be*

founded upon them. The novel and lyric poetry are transformed by the virtue of that freedom; they draw from it a variety, a fancy, a wealth at once more substantial and more delicate. While realism, in several directions, continues, and even grows more intense, a revolt breaks out against the compulsion enforced by realism, and by the positivist spirit whence it sprang.

In so far as this predominance of sensibility and imagination is concerned, the reaction which now begins recalls the Romanticism of the eighteen-twenties. But the new circumstances among which it takes place, and the different influences of its surroundings, introduce quite other elements into its composition. The Victorian age had bowed to a strict discipline in social life and in morals; this is now relaxed, and as a consequence the repressed instincts are set loose again; unless one should rather say that the instincts, stimulated by a revival of the elementary powers of human nature, bend down and break the rule of repression. The senses in their turn claim their freedom; they force a bolder range of subjects, of tone and expression, upon a nation addicted in principle to austerity in language and manners. Everywhere the new aim is intensity. On the plane of sensation, of individuality and desire, intensity is stressed at the expense of a reserve which excluded a whole class of realities from art or from unhampered discussion. On the plane of intelligence, on the other hand, this same need of intensity urges the critical faculties of the mind to a degree of rigour yet unknown. And so the period 1875-1914 not only appears as a counterpart to that which preceded it, showing complementary characteristics; it is at the same time, in many respects, the continuation and further development of the previous age. A new spirit of restlessness, anarchy and adventurous experiment is tending to replace the imposing and decorous wisdom of the Victorian compromise in all things; and it is often through this mood of revolt, rather than through the nature of the tendencies in themselves, that the present is different from the past. The influences from abroad, in so far as they are felt, act as so many stimuli, accentuating movements to which the instinct and genius of Great Britain had spontaneously given birth.

Thus made of such various elements, this age offers an extremely complex structure. It shows us the most contradictory tendencies side by side. The new Romanticism, which gives it

its general stamp, is steeped to the core with the keenest intellectuality. In one and the same group of writers, and occasionally in one and the same author—such as Samuel Butler—rational criticism in its typical form, free from any moderating influence, is associated with an attitude of rebellion against the excesses of scientific dogmatism. A psychological connection unites the renascence of religious idealism, full as it is of moral zeal, with promptings of free inquisitiveness, and with a bold curiosity of thought, the outcome of which is to liberate art from ethics, and ethics from all consistent rule. Forcible and earnest doctrines, which subordinate the individual to society or to the Empire, find themselves in contact with an æstheticism that recognises no law but itself.

The diverging currents of the period can thus be more precisely mapped out. First is heard the protest of intuitive and mystic needs against the authority of reason, and against mechanical views, which seemed the inevitable upshot of rational thinking. Philosophy proper, then the reflection of cultivated minds on the general conclusions of sciences, and the literature of fancy, testify to this revival. This revolt is mainly brought about by the renascence of feeling, but intelligence has its share in it; and so varied and rich is this movement, that such writers as Meredith and Samuel Butler meet there. Along with the illusion of a safe simple happiness attached to the all-sufficient virtue of truth, this period sees the secure optimism of the preceding age disappear; science now is the source from which a tragic or austere despair takes its rise; over the dark background of the universe, as read and explained by science, Thomson, Hardy and Gissing raise the fabric of their pessimistic visions, either cloud-built, or in close contact with the hard surface of a joyless earth.

The new Romanticism is thus liberated from the intellectual restraint which checked its growth, and now can freely and fully develop. Its inner impulse carries it either to the most dissimilar beliefs, or to a kind of hedonistic unbelief, which finds a bitter-sweet pleasure in absolute negation. In this broad field one sees at a glance a vast number of tendencies, personalities and works. Here is on one hand the lyrical poetry of Swinburne, with its sensuous ardour and its enthusiastic cult of words; and on the other hand that of Francis Thompson, with its wondering mystical faith. Next we find Stevenson, and the novel of imagina-

tion and adventure. Next again, the æstheticism of Pater and Wilde, with the many and various refinements, either subtle or morbid, which flourish in the decadent close of the century. The worship of art for art's sake, with George Moore, receives a darker shade from the harsh raw naturalism which the practice of France stimulates and guides: such essential unity there is in the spirit of moral freedom, the common source of both movements. And the Celtic revival diversifies this same background with its brooding fancies and dreams.

The opening of the new century witnesses a change in the main features of the period. Dispelling the thick atmosphere of perversity and pessimism which has seemed more and more to settle upon it, the doctrines of action call back the age to a healthier meditation of broad common principles of conduct. These doctrines have their roots in the forcible faiths of the Victorian prophets; but they belong in fact to their own time, and bear its stamp. The imperialism of Kipling takes its stand on an intuitive and violent contempt of intelligence; the constructive socialism of Wells is stirred by a powerful aspiration to spiritual light, which gradually endows it with a fervent soul. The enmity against reason and science goes with Chesterton as far as the imperative cult of the irrational.

On the eve of the Great War, English literature could show a fine galaxy of talented writers, between whom there did not seem to exist the least convergence in temperament or in method. No school puts its discipline in force; no grouping or organising principle was discovered. On the whole, the reign of the new Romanticism was not over; in other words, the larger number of artists still followed an instinctive preference, whether obscure or lucid, for imaginative emotion as opposed to intelligence. But the novel, the drama, and poetry, with Galsworthy, Bennett, Shaw, Yeats, Masefield, and so many others, while they allowed the persistent effect of this preference to come out, still would tone it down, and qualify it through many contradictory elements. It was becoming increasingly clear that the individual author was bound by no rule but that of his own temperament; that any desire to write or create under the guiding authority of artistic forms common to all, accepted in advance, justified and prepared by precedents, was finally disappearing. The first Romanticism had freed the personality of the writer from its shackles; the

second, coming after the attempt at a relative and partial synthesis which the Victorian age had made, encouraged such a teeming wealth of idiosyncrasies, that the very feeling of some moral link between writers of the same generation tended more and more to die out. It is hardly possible, here, to speak of a literary period in the proper meaning of the word; the unity of time is, most often, a mere outside frame.

Has the unexampled harrowing of souls during the last war laid in them the seeds of a more harmonious harvest, reduced to a more uniform quality by the very vigour of the sap, the fertility of the soil? None can say yet. Looking only at this latest phase, we might think that the literature of England, like that of France, had reached the point of saturation at which the accumulated influences of the successive ages impart a richly flavoured complexity to the products of a national art, but deny it the power of being efficiently renewed through a simple change. Combined in the depths of the national mind, the tendencies which have successively triumphed in the course of a long and varied past now penetrate and alter one another; they are all, and in every case, more or less present and active. It is not impossible that an art founded on the search for balance, and so, predominantly rational, should try soon in England—as it has been doing in France—to replace the new Romanticism of yesterday; but in this event, it is extremely probable that this art, at the very core of its endeavour to realise order and intelligence, would experience the incurable fever, the sensitiveness, the emotions, the ardours, with which the nineteenth century was saturated to its inmost consciousness, and which it has laid deep in the substance of our beings.

To be consulted: A. W. Benn, *Modern England*, 1908, L. Cazamian, *Modern England*, 1911; A. Chevrillon, *Nouvelles études anglaises*, 1910; J. W. Cunliffe, *English Literature During the Last Half-Century*, 1920; R. W. Gretton, *A Modern History of the English People*, 1880-1910, 1912; Ed Guyot, *Le Socialisme et l'évolution de l'Angleterre contemporaine*, 1913; W. H Hudson, *A Short History of English Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, 1918; Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen-Nineties*, 1913; P. Mantoux, *A Travers l'Angleterre contemporaine*, 1909; L. Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, 1919; Hugh Walker, *The Literature of the Victorian Era*, 1910; Harold Williams, *Modern English Writers*, 1890-1914, 1920.

CHAPTER II

THE REVOLT AGAINST MECHANISM

1. *Philosophy: Idealism and Pragmatism.*—Through the end of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of the twentieth, a powerful movement renews the spirit of philosophy; the limits of certainty are shifted; the notion of truth is transformed, and the hope of human knowledge emboldened. A revolt of the mystical, emotional, religious, and last, but not least, practical needs of the soul, overthrows or shakes the authority of universal mechanism, which rationalist thinkers have felt justified in establishing upon the general results of the sciences. The feeling of moral freedom victoriously asserts itself, along with that of the autonomy of consciousness, of its independence in relation to the laws of matter, and of the privileges through which it transcends the world of quantity; and thus, in various ways, a declining intellectual ambition is revivified. New attention is paid to metaphysics; while psychology, stirred by a secret thrill of deeper aspiration, tends towards the metaphysical plane. A diffused spirituality permeates doctrines which, dissimilar as they are in their methods or principles, still affect the emotions or the will in an analogous manner. Whether they grow out of Kant's or of Hegel's influence; or from an original fund of idealism; or gather about the specific tenets of pragmatism, and subordinate truth to man; or set up intuition as the main source of knowledge, they thoroughly harmonise in their trends, their motives, and their aims with the contemporary revival of literature and art. Springing from the same psychological demands, they constitute in the field of thought the natural counterpart of a renascent Romanticism.

This movement spreads over the whole of Europe. It even includes the American continent, where pragmatism has struck its main roots. In so far as Great Britain is concerned, the new philosophical ferment is active, manifold, and influences many personalities; it has not, however, produced there any work as outstanding by the creative vigour of the thought, and the

winning charm of the manner, as that of Bergson in France. Its claims are embodied in remarkable minds, with features all their own; but their ascendancy, subdued and chiefly ethical, or in other cases technical and perceived only by the initiated, has hardly reached the general public except through the indirect effect of their teaching. On the whole, the philosophers have not lost touch with the surrounding life; the less so, as they are better aware of the claims of life itself. But none of them stands to the period in the same relationship as a Locke or a Hume did to previous ages, incontrovertibly at the intellectual centre.

The power of attraction which T. H. Green [1] possessed is an historical fact; it has left lasting tokens of itself. It has vanished, however, with the character and actual presence of the man; and we need other testimonies than his writings to realise it. His critical thought assails modern rationalism in its firmest stronghold, the work of Hume; and just as the arch-sceptic had found decisive grounds for doubt in all things, Green picks out defective links in the chain of arguments by means of which he demonstrated his thesis. His positive doctrine aims at proving that knowledge, moral activity, and nature, all imply an essential spirituality, but for which human experience could not have been organised.

At the same time the need to believe, and to escape the agnostic empiricism of Mill and Spencer, leads some thinkers to seek the salvation of philosophy in the vast system which Hegel built. Stirling [2] has explored that fabric full of darkness and mystery; from it he has brought back the enthusiasm of a discovery, and in the tone of a prophet, like that of Carlyle, he announces his revelation. By Hegel again William Wallace,[3] and Caird,[4] are inspired; the latter is bold enough to follow the stream of philosophical criticism back to its very source, the work of Kant, in order to find there, not indeed the negation, but the confirmation of idealism. And with Bradley,[5] whose thought

[1] Thomas Hill Green (1836-82); Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford; Introduction to edition of Hume's *Treatise*, 1874-75; *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 1883; *Works*, 1885, etc. See the study by Fairbrother, 1896; Nettleship (new ed.), 1906.

[2] James Hutchinson Stirling (1820-1909): *The Secret of Hegel*, 1865. See study by *A. H. Stirling*, 1912.

[3] *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, 1894.

[4] Edward Caird (1835-1908): *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, 1889. See study by H. Jones and J. H. Muirhead, 1921.

[5] Francis Herbert Bradley, born in 1866: *Appearance and Reality*, 1893.

is too individual to be traced to any master, the influence of the Hegelian philosophy is still recognisable. His doctrine is all instinct with a vigorous effort towards the affirmations of a transcendental faith; but the paths which it follows are singularly like those of scepticism. The idea of relation is predominant in the life of the mind; and this idea, involving a contradiction, disappears when analysed; there remains nothing but the one and indivisible reality which is revealed to us by concrete experience, and over which the necessities of action weave the artificial network of our concepts.

Thus while Bradley is a metaphysician, and an almost mystic one, he yet finds the justification of knowledge in the privileged needs of life. He is in agreement with the disciples of William James. As the latest and plainest expression of the revolt against the theories of intellectualism, pragmatism is the direct outcome of ancient, time-honoured instincts in the English mind. It is the natural conclusion of the groping attempts made through the centuries by a national thought trying, on the plane of philosophy, to define the paramount claims of practice, which it knew intuitively, and was resolutely bent on putting in force. But it is the American branch of the Anglo-Saxon race which has given their most authoritative form to these tendencies. Within the British Isles, pragmatism is lived by many; its speculative formula is accepted only by a few. The humanism of Schiller,[1] in deep accord with it, emphasises in the direction of pluralism its protest against the passion of unity, that old dream of dogmatic reason.

Rationalism, however, has not given up its claim. Wiser and more supple in misfortune, it seems to gather new strength from its contact with concrete reality; the victim, in its turn, of some injustice, it is waiting for the better times which it can expect from the excess of the reaction that it has itself let loose. The part which it plays in the philosophy of to-day is modest, but not inglorious; it can still show not a few brilliant thinkers, and uncompromising minds, such as Bertrand Russell's.[2] The

[1] F. C. S. Schiller: *The Riddles of the Sphinx*, 1891; *Humanism*, 1903.

[2] Bertrand Russell: *The Principles of Mathematics*, 1903; *The Problems of Philosophy*, 1912, etc. His doctrine may be described as realistic; it retains something of pragmatism, admits with it the plurality of experience, is distrustful of the coherence of a system, but it gives even to diversity an intellectual and irreducible character. Opposed on the whole to pragmatism, the method and spirit of which harmonised with a new Romanticism, the more recent school of

apparent interruption of its reign yet leaves it its silent sway *over the never-ending process through which the many and average intelligences are gradually familiarised and reconciled with* the relative order of the universe. Rationalism remains the very soul of science; and science, while it has been repelled from spiritual fields which it had prematurely invaded, and been thus driven back upon its own undisputed domain, yet extends its dominion there farther every day. The contemporary period, characterised as it is by an anti-intellectualist revolt, is steeped to the core in the spirit of the inevitable intellectualism.[1]

2. *Samuel Butler.*—It is in the light of this essentially dual condition of mind that the personality of a great precursor, Samuel Butler,[2] assumes its most precise significance.

[illegible] of to-morrow [illegible] rds a classical [illegible] s, history, and [illegible] period may be [illegible] rk of Frederic [illegible] nderstand and [illegible] they combine, more or less, the suppleness of intuitive perception, but of which they teach, by [illegible] to their compatriots. Born all three at the beginning [illegible] l continued until the twentieth century [illegible] intellectuality. Frederic Harrison [illegible] *Order and Progress*, 1875; *Ruskin* [illegible] *of a Layman*, 1907, etc. Sir Leslie [illegible] *of National Biography*, published: [illegible] *s in a Library*, 1874-79, *History of* [illegible] '76-81; *The Science of Ethics*, 1882; *An Agnostic's Apology*, 1893; *The English Utilitarians*, 1900, etc., see *Life and Letters*, by F. W. Maitland, 1906. John (later Lord) Morley (1838-1923) *Voltaire*, 1871; *Burke*, 1873; *Rousseau*, 1873; *On Compromise*, 1874; *Diderot*, etc., 1878; *Cromwell*, 1900; *Life of Gladstone*, 1903, etc.; see study by J. H. Morgan, 1924; by P. Braybrooke, 1924.

[2] Samuel Butler, born in the rectory of Langar in 1835, the son and grandson of clerics, studied at Shrewsbury and Cambridge, aimed at a Church career, but renounced it for conscientious reasons, and for several years became a sheep-breeder in New Zealand; read Darwin and contributed several humorous essays on his theory; his letters to his parents supplied the material for a volume of impressions, *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement*, 1863 Returning to England in 1864, he studied painting, published anonymously *The Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ . . . Critically Examined*, 1865, *Erewhon, or Over the Range*, 1872, which created a sensation; *The Fair Haven*, 1873; then under his own name, *Life and Habit*, 1877; *Evolution Old and New*, 1879, *God the Known and God the Unknown*, 1879, *Unconscious Memory*, 1880; *Luck or Cunning*, 1887 From his frequent travels in Italy he drew the matter for *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont*, 1881; *Ex Voto*, 1888. *The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler*, 1896, is a biography of his grandfather, the famous pedagogue. The Homeric problem attracted him and he solved it after his fashion in *The Authoress of the Odyssey*, 1897; he translated the *Iliad*, 1898, and the *Odyssey*, 1900. In *Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered*, etc., 1899, he touched upon the Shakespearean problem He returned

His youth coincided with the main body and central part of the Victorian era; he experienced its triumphant self-confidence, its imperious order. He reacted against them; his originality found itself in rebellion. Thus stimulated, his desire for moral independence was carried to extremes; he established his life upon one exclusive principle, doubt, and the solitary search for truth. So his temper is aggressive, his irony harsh. About 1865-75, he stands as a fairly complete type of the unsocial intellectual, at war with hostile surroundings, whose prejudices he does not assail in front, but which he attacks through a series of converging manœuvres.

Nevertheless, he moves with his century. Without blunting the edge of his criticism, he applies it more temperately; or chiefly, he turns it against unexpected enemies. He has impugned religion, ethics, feelings, the irrational traditions and habits which go to the making of modern society. Now he impugns the scientists, the teachers of a truth that is new, and looks upon itself as proof against all attacks; on each of the most serious problems of the time he has a definite view, and it is not theirs. As if he were growing conscious of the fate which set him in opposition to the uncompromising rationalists, he gives fuller development to his ideas, and the shades which he thus adds to them lend them a new aspect; he assigns a limit to reason, states the rights of instinct, of intuition; a more indulgent wisdom bridges over the difference which parted him from his fellow-beings, and from their inconsistent behaviour. His philosophy, now empirical and respectful of the claims of facts, looks deeper into the riddle of life, and tends to solve it, no longer in the way of the mechanists, but in that of the idealists.

His work is of an unusual complexity, just as the strongly marked character of the writer is original through the variety of his features. To the very end of his career, in spite of his

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to religious criticism in *Erewhon Revisited,* 1901, and died in 1902. His novel, *The Way of All Flesh,* was published in 1903, and his *Essays on Life, Art and Science* in 1904. The *Note-Books of Samuel Butler,* consisting of various notes and extracts, were published in 1912 by H. Festing Jones. See the biography by Festing Jones (*Samuel Butler, a Memoir,* 1919); the studies by Gilbert Cannan (*Samuel Butler, a Critical Study*), 1915; J. F. Harris, 1916; J. W. Cunliffe (*English Literature During the Last Half-Century*), 1920; *Valéry Larbaud,* 1922; M. L. Cazamian (*Roman et Idées en Angleterre*), 1923; P. J. de Lange, *Samuel Butler, Critic and Philosopher,* 1925; C. E. M. Joad, *S. Butler,* 1925; R. S. Garnett, *S. Butler and His Family Relations,* 1926.

fertile inventiveness, he remains a solitary figure, unknown or misunderstood by the general public, anxious only to keep unhampered the sincerity of his mind, which is ever freely expressed. In some respects, he is an inventor with crotchets, an obstinate rider of hobbies; in others, his line of advance is the very path followed by the progress of contemporary thought; he adumbrates neo-Lamarckian doctrines, pragmatism, Bergsonism; and through his humour, through his full-flavoured sense of the concrete, his liking for compromise, he belongs indeed to the normal, average, and traditional manner of his race. . . .

From his early manhood he seeks for a rational religion, and the problem engrosses his thought to the end of his life. His experience loosens the ties that attach him to Anglican orthodoxy; he then subjects his former belief to an acute analysis, and makes up an exegesis for himself. At the fountain-head of Christianity is the resurrection of Christ. Scrutinising the evidence, Butler sees the miracle vanish; unhesitatingly, he substitutes a hypothesis for the faith of the centuries: Jesus did not die on the cross; it is a living person that reappeared to the sight of the apostles. *Erewhon, The Fair Haven, Erewhon Revisited, The Way of All Flesh*, assail with incessant allusions, with deadly ironies, the Church, its doctrine, its ministers, the feelings and the practice of the faithful. We are let into the souls of ecclesiastics: they are human, weak, crushed by a mission which ought to rouse enthusiasm, and only produces torpor. To all practical purposes, churches are banks in which the pious, speculating on eternal rewards, in exchange for cash receive drafts on the hereafter. So readily does the popular mind take to the marvellous, that the most negligible nucleus of fact, the fraud of supernatural appearances, will bring about the instantaneous crystallisation of a system of myths, and a cult. Founded on error, a religious organisation maintains itself by means of cynicism, credulity, cowardice, interested motives.

This criticism in the manner of Voltaire is wrapped up in transparent veils, through which it bristles aggressively on every side. But along with it, and in close connection with it, there appears a respectful, liberal attitude, a sympathetic intelligence, that grows, gathers strength, and finally conquers. The heart has little share in it; Butler is never free from a touch of dryness. Still, he has a faith of his own, in which almost mystical elements

are superadded to the findings of reason. A sane man should comply with the surviving of consolatory illusions; he should spiritualise the old dogmas from within. In the memory of ourselves that we leave, in the lasting fecundity of our actions, we find an immortality on this earth. The divine is immanent in the universe; and beyond the known God whom our reflection can encompass, God the Unknown dwells in the infinitude of space. Thus a link is preserved between Butler and the community of believers. He chooses a place for himself with them, among the more enlightened members of the "Broad Church." And while *Erewhon* was rife with pessimistic suggestions—as in that theme, so much like Schopenhauer, of the unborn whose pressure overcomes the aversion of the living against life—a moderate optimism now quietly predominates: it is good to live; man can be, if he likes, at peace with the world.

The reason is that the outlook of the philosopher has been singularly broadened. Butler is one of the first disciples of Darwin; but his allegiance to the transformist theory does not prevent him from making free with it; he applies it humorously to machines, and calls up the strange prospect of a world in which they will have reduced their masters to slavery. And now the purely mechanical process of natural selection does not seem to him any longer able to explain the obscure triumphs of being, in the course of development. Buffon, Lamarck, Erasmus Darwin, had at the first attempt formed juster views than the author of *The Origin of Species:* the history of the animal kingdom shows us the working of an adaptation—that elastic faculty, at the heart of which an intuitive perception is lurking and active. The main spring of this evolution is not chance, but a concrete divination, "cunning." Having thus rediscovered the path to vitalism, Butler follows it as far as the notion of a kind of "élan vital" residing in the subconscious; and his psychology turns into metaphysics: the world is composed of matter and memory; the essence of mind is to remember. Not only does physical determinism fail to govern the inner life, but this is pure activity. The struggle for existence was his starting-point: he now stops within one easy stage of creative evolution, and of the autonomy of the will in reflective states of consciousness.

He does not dwell at such length on the social problem. In this field, caution and conformity win him over more quickly.

One may say, no doubt, that property is theft; but this is an entirely theoretical view, and hardly matters. In fact, a sane man shall not interfere with the existing frame of society, the main prop and stay of order. *Erewhon* satirises the Victorian compromise, with its timid, routine-loving passiveness; whether it is shown in its true light, hardly disguised by transposition, or the picture of a rational civilisation is set up over against it. In this country of Nowhere, the Universities, "colleges of Unreason," teach the "hypothetical language," the inestimable advantage of which is, indeed, that it is good for nothing. Just as our courts will punish a culprit, that diseased person, without inquiring into the degree of his responsibility in his crime, those of the Erewhonians will punish a patient, that guilty person, without inquiring into the degree of his responsibility for his illness. The latter absurdity is no other than our own; and to, such as have eyes to see, it is pregnant with a profitable lesson. From this country of Erewhon, which is no Utopia, but a satire, we shall come back with more clear-sighted minds, but not in the mood of revolutionaries. The deepest reason is to be found in the doings of instinct; from tradition, the work of an instinctive experience, every attempt at an improvement must of necessity take its start.

In the same way, morals are put in some jeopardy, but eventually made safe again. The right of society to inflict punishment is questioned; but while on one side it is curtailed, on the other it is extended. No doubt, the vulgar notion of virtues and vices does not bear scrutiny. There can be no fecundity in any self-seeking motion of the soul; every restraint likewise, every repression is fruitless. *The Way of All Flesh* is the simple pitiless relation, at times equal to Flaubert's novel, of an "ecclesiastical education," and its consequences. Still, Butler does not destroy anything that is rooted in some vital necessity. He is here a harsh critic of the family, as society has made it; elsewhere (in *Erewhon Revisited*) he reveres it as a fact of nature. Morals may be a convention, but they are an indispensable one; what matters is to permeate them, as much as possible, with those veritable and precious balms of the hearts of all children of grace: sincerity, simplicity, goodness.

In other subjects, more remotely connected with life, the impulses of Butler's vivacious temperament have been indulged less guardedly. His portrait would lack one of its most charac-

teristic features, were no mention made of his enthusiastic tastes, his headstrong theories: the musical sovereignty of Händel, the authoress of the *Odyssey*, etc. On the other hand, this lively personality of perception and judgments imparts a wonderful animation and zest to all that he has written about the things which he likes or admires: oratorios, paintings, churches, books, or landscapes.

For he is a writer in his own way. He could have been in the way of many others: early in life, he had written narratives in a sober but forcible key; he had aimed at imaginative and dramatic effects. Very soon, acting under scrupulous motives, and the austere principles of an intellectual, he retrenched all such intentions from his style, stripped it of everything that was not necessary to the clearest and most direct expression of ideas or facts. The process was a loss to the artist in him: the first chapters of *Erewhon,* an example of his early manner, are the work of a master in the craft of story-telling. But on the other hand, that loss was a gain to the diffusion of his thought: he reaped from his sacrifice a perfect and irresistible honesty of statement. His humour is one of the most implicit in literature, and one of the most scientific in method: its surface is not stirred by the slightest tremor; nothing reveals the hidden energy of the intention; the active simultaneous awareness of the double meaning of the words, of the dual quality of the things meant. With its somewhat severe frankness, its somewhat dry precision, this language has literary merit of a high order; it is not a means of emotion, nor of beauty; but an apt instrument of persuasion and analysis.

Butler's work is of very varied interest. Primarily an essayist, a moralist, a critic, a philosopher, he was a novelist as well, but reluctantly. The first *Erewhon* is a series of episodes and dissertations, of superior value through its irony, and altogether worthy of being compared with *Gulliver's Travels;* the second, though the author was at pains over its construction, and felt satisfied with the result, is full of a fancy yet too unreal for its logic to make much impression upon us. Only *The Way of All Flesh* can properly be called a novel; and Butler had not the courage to publish it while he lived. Its worth lies in the minute, accurate painting of manners and circumstances, in the dissection of motives; the characters themselves are unequally good, and

even the best, whose truth is striking, are rather lifeless. The whole is a creation of intelligence, and of an indulgent wisdom as well; but it looks like a vast and powerful drawing in outline, not like a picture. The stamp of artificiality is recognisable there on the fruits of too analytical an inspiration; and if, ignoring the rich substance of the thought, one wishes to dwell on the pleasure of mere form, this will be chiefly found in the most spontaneous parts of Butler's works; some chapters in *Erewhon*, *Canterbury Settlement*, the letters, the episodes in the *Note-Books*, and those *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont*, in which he opens to us such charming vistas through the land of free paganism, of sunshine, and of Christian art, which best contented all his tastes. . . .

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3. *Meredith.*—Very different as he is from Samuel Butler, Meredith[1] nevertheless holds a rather similar position in the

[1] George Meredith, born in 1828 in Hampshire, of English family, with Welsh and Irish ancestors, passed two years as a schoolboy in Germany, studied law, married the daughter of Thomas L. Peacock, gave up the Bar for literature and journalism, collected his poems in a volume (1851), collaborated in several periodicals, among them the *Fortnightly Review*, which he directed for some time; from 1860 onwards he was reader of manuscripts for the publishing house of Chapman and Hall. Separated from his wife in 1858, a widower in 1862, he married, in 1866, Marie Vulliamy. His first novels. *The Shaving of Shagpat*, 1856, *Farina*, 1857; *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, 1859; *Evan Harrington*, 1861; *Emilia in England* (*Sandra Belloni*), 1864; *Rhoda Fleming*, 1865, *Vittoria*, 1867; *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*, 1871, were received, on the whole, rather coldly by the critics and the public. Success and, in its train, fame came with *Beauchamp's Career*, 1876; *The Egoist*, 1877; *The Tragic Comedians*, 1880; *Diana of the Crossways*, 1885 *One of Our Conquerors*, 1891, *Lord Ormont and His*

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history of ideas. If temperaments are summarily classified, his will be found to contain the same duality in its elements. But the proportion between these is not the same; and besides, the power of an original personality matters much more than that general analogy of substance. In all essential respects, as an artist, as a writer, as a man, Meredith stands in a strongly marked contrast with Butler.

He belongs more unquestionably to the new Romanticism. Born under the declining sway of the first, he retained the germs of Romantic intensity laid in his deeper instincts. He lived through the critical and scientific period of the century, and was permeated by its tendencies. The secret bent of his own nature fitted him for the keenest play of a susceptible and sharp intelligence; he thus found himself at one with the generation of the fifties in the cult of inner clear-sightedness. But this very cult in him has an ardour, an impassioned vehemence; it is reconciled with the fire of imagination. When the intuitive faculties of mind reawake, Meredith finds himself ready to live by their law of freedom. His worship of ideas, the queens of the mental world, is fraught with enthusiasm; reason to him is an illumination. He showers piercing arrows of satire at dullness, ignorance, routine; but he makes no difference between the passivity of unconsciousness, and that of a spurious kind of logic. The most central effort in his work is aimed against the automatic

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Aminta, 1894; *The Amazing Marriage*, 1895; *Celt and Saxon* (a posthumous and incomplete publication) were less popular. He also published a critical essay, *On the Idea of Comedy*, etc., 1877; short stories, *The House on the Beach*, 1877, etc.; and poems: *Modern Love*, etc., 1862; *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth*, 1883; *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life*, 1887; *A Reading of Earth*, 1888; *Odes in Contribution to the Song of French History*, 1898; *A Reading of Life*, 1901; *Last Poems*, 1909, etc. He lived in the country, not far from London, surrounded by the cult of an élite, and died in 1909. *Works*, Memorial ed., 1909-11 (twenty-seven vols., bibliography by Esdaile); Standard ed., 1914. *Poetical Works*, ed. by Trevelyan, 1912; *Letters*, ed. by his son, 1912. See the studies by Le Gallienne, 1890; Jerrold, 1902; Legouis ("L'Egoïste de George Meredith," *Revue germanique*, July-August, 1905); Elton (*Modern Studies*), 1907; May Henderson (*George Meredith, Novelist, Poet, Reformer*), 1907; Curle (*Aspects of George Meredith*), 1908; Moffat (*George Meredith, a Primer to Novels*), 1909; Photiadès (*George Meredith: sa Vie, son Imagination, son Art*), 1910; Trevelyan (*The Poetry and Philosophy of George Meredith*), 1906; Beach (*George Meredith and the Comic Spirit*), 1912; Crees, 1918; Ellis (*George Meredith, His Life and Friends*, etc.), 1920; Galland (*George Meredith, les Cinquante Premières Années*), 1923; idem (*George Meredith and British Criticism*), 1923; L. Wolff (*G. M., Poète et Romancier*), 1924; *J. B. Priestley* (*George Meredith*), 1926.

exercise of thought. An apostle of science and of salutary truth, he renews and refreshes the sources of both. He teaches the free self-possession of the soul, the energy of a valiant and cheerful heart. He must be numbered among those who in the last quarter of the nineteenth century wage war against the encroaching progress of mechanism.

He has the gift, and feels the desire, of precise, close, adequate knowledge; and the subject that he wants to know is man. But his analysis works by a series of visions and "élans"; it re-creates its object much rather than it divides it. The most delicate shades of the moral world, like those of the visible landscape, caught with the sharpest perception, are not isolated by him; he at once allows them to melt with all others into a changing play of shapes and colours, the moving fascination of which holds his gaze fast. A subtle psychologist, he is at the same time a lover of fancy, and a poet. So keen is the eagerness that carries him to instantaneous notations, that he grants but very slight care to the indispensable connections of style; his art is that of an impressionist.

Such is the paradox of his work. Again and again it proclaims to an empirical people the duty of having intelligence and thinking clearly. But the light with which it is itself flooded is trying and difficult; it surprises, dazzles or fatigues very many readers through the brightness of its rays, and the constant intermittence of the radiating focus. It is a flashing and twinkling light. Nothing can be more distant from such a method than a matter-of-fact order, a severe sequence of ideas.

The genius of Meredith is thus stamped with a double character. Through important features, it is related to the group of Utilitarians, in the eyes of whom the most urgent task is to make life more rational; through others, and more essential ones, he belongs to the lineage of the great intuitive thinkers. His youth felt at once the influence of a prophet, Carlyle, and that of an ironist, Peacock; he owed something to his contact with the Germany of metaphysics and mysticism, and much to his elective taste for French balance and penetration. There is in him a Celtic element, of which rather too much has been made; his nature, however, is deeply English. The *Essay on Comedy* emphasises the value of a refined ideal of artificial culture;

Richard Feverel reminds us of the fragility of systems, of the force of instinct, and leads our ambitions back to the primitive wisdom embodied in the individual being. . . .

Thus richly provided with complexities, his work is imposing in the two fields of the novel and of poetry, less distant with him than is usually the case. The novelist developed according to his native preferences, and hardly followed any model. His period of experiments was short. The fanciful Oriental tale, *The Shaving of Shagpat,* shows an invention brilliant, and less purely verbal than one might well think; but it is not free from some exuberance—a weakness which Meredith was never to cure. The manner of Peacock crops up at times in the narratives of the first phase—down to *Beauchamp's Career*—in which the artistic intent of the writer is less deliberate. As a whole, the Meredithian novel is original, distinct, and can be legitimately studied in itself.

One should recognise in it two species, which roughly answer to the two successive parts of a long career. Each novel is organised, either round a theme of the traditional type, with a constructed plot; or about a purely internal subject. In the former case, the story more easily broadens into historical or social vistas. But whether the work keeps nearer to one or the other type, the essential object remains the study of characters. At bottom, the matter in hand is always psychological analysis. However elaborate and profuse the plot may be, and even when —as in *Vittoria*—it grows to an epic breadth, picturing the heroic struggle of a people for freedom, the main source of interest never lies in the events, nor in their material consequences. Fate, chance and circumstances are either conditions or forces at play; they contribute to raise the stage upon which is enacted the only real drama, that of consciousness, whose parts are performed by passions and wills. In its systematic idealism, the novel of Meredith is not very dissimilar to the classical notion of tragedy.

It differs from it altogether in its atmosphere. Strength and clearness of delineation are here sacrificed to a quivering intensity, which confuses the outlines, while multiplying the suggestive power of the images. The perspective, shifting and strained as it is through an ever-active eagerness, is not unlike that of dreams and visions. The picture of existence is at the same time detailed and vague, steeped in a diffused sensibility which grows animated

and interested, feels merry at the sight of the unconsciousness and absurdity of human beings, exalted at the magnificent sudden appearances of nature, grand and sober, or bright and broad. The rhythm upon which those scenes are unrolled is somewhat jerky and feverish; and every aspect of the universe is interpreted poetically. It is by its poetical quality, as well, that the psychology of Meredith is characterised; it perceives the inner life as essentially in motion; it throbs with a thrill of discovery and surprise; it is keen like the sudden rush of an emotion, quick like the fluctuations of an agitated soul; it is incomparable in its power of instantaneously catching the most evanescent shades. It is thus living, just as it is concrete; the figures and equivalents which it uses to render the liquid yet interrupted flow of the stream of consciousness, impart to us the direct sensation, not the abstract idea of it. Creative as it is in the very detail of its expression, this analysis is of an order superior to that of Browning.

The characters upon which it is brought to bear are remarkable in their number, variety and substance; many of them have the minutely detailed features, the several planes of increasing depth, peculiar to the beings whom our familiar acquaintance has probed below the surface. Meredith more fondly studies the classes in which leisurely culture has given the mind the whole range and delicacy of its shades; in which manners have their full refinement, while their slightest inflections are loaded with meaning. But he has known as well how to make men and women of lower condition act, feel and speak, not without most often endowing them, it is true, with a natural distinction. Any systematic intention of realism is foreign to his temperament; he feels against that artistic method a repugnance which he has more than once expressed.

The haughty figures of noblemen—a Lord Ormont, an Everard Romfrey; the half-tone faces of indulgent sages, unpretending philosophers, men of studious or leisurely habits; the favourite creations of the humorist, the original characters, like the magnificent tailor whose memory presides over *Evan Harrington;* the young men carried away by their eagerness, whether it is selfish or more often generous, and learning to live—a Richard Feverel, a Beauchamp—preserve the clearest outline in our remembrance; and although such portraits fall naturally into

groups, they are highly individualised. But it is in the delineation of women that Meredith is at his best. In this field lies for him a preference both of instinct and of principle. His susceptible genius has a touch of the feminine; he champions the moral and social cause of beings to whom the law made by man was for long, he thinks, more unfair than it was pleased to realise. The series of these heroines is a chivalrous profession of faith. They often possess, with the charm of sweetness, a valiant energy, and a spiritual brightness which throws into shade the more prosaic virtues of the men. Lucy, Vittoria, Clara, Renée, Diana, Aminta, Nesta, through their freshness, their purity, their courage, and at the same time their sure, intuitive intelligence, are not unworthy of their Shakespearean sisters. The imagination which has created them has added to the treasure of human nobleness some of its most graceful and most brilliant visions.

Meredith's thought is instinct with generosity. It feels with the victims of the injustice inseparable from a social order based on authority. He carries within himself the democracy of the mind. Still, his temper is anything but that of rebellion. His humour plays freely about the existing hierarchy, without trying to destroy it. While he shows us that the son of a tailor can be a "gentleman," he is aware of all that culture owes to heredity, tradition, atmosphere. His preference as a painter and a psychologist clings to the flowers of elegant life; he accepts the material conditions of refinement, wishing only that they may be accessible to a larger number. His criticism in the sphere of society, as of character, is psychological. What he rises against is the intellectual torpor of his countrymen. He tinkles the bells of his ironical fancy in the face of slow routine-loving England; he laughs at her for being, in her timidity, afraid of ideas; he asks her to ruminate a ration of them every day. Thus seeing through the strong and the weak points of his people, its active virtues, its utilitarian narrowness, he seizes with rare acuteness the features of other national idiosyncrasies; no English observer has better understood the moral nature of France.

To the genius of French manners he turns for the example of a literary and worldly life, subjected to the supervision of a sharpened perception, of a shrewd judgment, which represses individual errors, corrects all excesses to the benefit of a balanced wisdom; and this active reason, the defender of social reality, he

names the comic spirit. True comedy is thus more than a well-bred diversion; it is the very function through which the collective interplay of characters and intelligences is made manifest and lasting. It is only this spirit, thanks to its sly nimbleness, that will be able to explore the subtle intricacies of the most natural vice, the most inextricably bound up with the legitimate coherence of personality: selfishness. In this sense, *The Egoist* is indeed the most typical of Meredith's novels. No other is more definitely the study, through its depth and in all its minute shades, of a psychological problem. This study is of extreme penetration; but the analysis of Meredith is too intuitive to gain much by concentrating on a single object; it has soon exhausted the essence of an inevitable self-absorption; it hardly renews its effects but by repeating them; and Sir Willoughby is somewhat mechanical and forced. The wealth and the life of this book, which shows us a classical subject treated by the most impressionist of painters, are in accessory elements—the surroundings of the hero, the background, the energy of the imagination and the style.

The style of Meredith has its phases, and as it were its degrees. It developed, through irregular stages, towards an extreme type, that of *One of Our Conquerors.* All along its curve, it offers various aspects, either relatively normal or markedly original. When the latter predominates, we have a definite transition from the direct and constructed mode of expression, such as that English prose had known till then, to the indirect and suggestive. Romantic prose-writers—and especially De Quincey—had abundantly turned to use the poetry of rhythm and the brilliance of images. Carlyle had broken up the logical mould of the sentence, and substituted for it the strong hustling fragments of an impulsive thought. Meredith owes something to those predecessors; but his temperament as a writer is extremely individual. One might describe it as the paradoxical union of two elements: the discontinuity of a seer of visions, to whom the universe is dissolved into a shifting network of fragmentary appearances; and the subtlety of a thinker, to whom things are interesting only through the abstract relations which the mind extracts from them, and which make them for it interchangeable.

The effect of these two combined tendencies is to produce under the reader's eyes a throbbing, rapid, piercing series of

intellectual flashes, each of which reveals a facet of an infinitely varied world, and casts over it a ray, not of simple light, but of luminous analogy. The expression of things is always transposed; and the transposition takes place into the tone of intelligence. The search for correspondences is the triumph of this style. In this respect, it is indeed the token of a new era—that in which reviving or enduring Romanticism mingles with the predominant intellectuality, and gives birth to Symbolism. Meredith discovers the suggestive symbols of feelings or material objects in the delicate and rare shades of ideas, as they have been fixed by the vocabulary of philosophy and analysis; and thence the strong Latin element in his style, often loaded with the polysyllabic terms of abstract thought. But not only does he use this category of signs; he knows how to work up the fund of concrete vocabulary. In each word of the latter class, he dissociates the peculiar sensation which it answers, and handles the quality thus extracted as a means of equivalence; so that it is still to the purposes of a symbolist that he employs the graphic stock of popular language. Admirable in its unexpectedness, its vigour, its compactness, that style is strained to a degree which the average mind cannot long bear; it will tire the most quick-witted or practised reader, and indeed it tends as to its natural ideal towards the far-fetched obscurity of the "metaphysical" poets of the seventeenth century. The revealing, striking illuminations, the pleasure of an ever intense intellectual activity, or of a new, fresh, humorous perception of life and things, do not make us forget the strangeness, the effort, the artifice of an incessant transcription, which we must decipher, and the key of which we sometimes miss.

This style is that of a poet of intelligence, profound, refined, indefatigable. It is no wonder that seeking for self-expression, Meredith should have found it as well in the more regular rhythm, in the more purified form, of philosophical lyricism. His verse differs from his prose through a superior density, a more open stressing of the idea. The more substantial part of his positive thought is enclosed in it, whether he still treats a dramatic theme, as in *Modern Love*, or immediately enters upon the fervent meditation, at once personal and general, which is to him poetry itself.

The doctrine of Meredith is a spiritualism which, resting on the most material reality, on the facts of experience, springs up

to noble hopes. Evolution, a cosmic law, is the very principle, not the negation, of the religion of the mind. A divinity dwells in the depths of the universe; and the earth, the mother of man, is the sacred fount of health and wisdom in which he must again and again be refreshed. Read by the eyes of imagination, Nature teaches us an order, a beauty, a virtue; and in our submission to her will we shall find a joy. The pantheistic optimism of Meredith is not unlike that of Wordsworth. It is more complex, accompanied by a more vivid perception of the mysteriousness of things, and of the holy terror that thrills the *Woods of Westermain.* It finds its nourishment in elements that are not so simple, and establishes more subtle relationships between the influences of the soil or the sky, and our soul. It does not directly deal with scientific and metaphysical problems; but one feels that it has breathed the atmosphere of metaphysics and science. It takes its rise in animality, and ends as a mystic vision. Man, it teaches, is made up of his instincts, in which the blood voices its needs; of the working of his brain, which understands, accepts and judges; and of his spiritual faculties, in which there grows, through the passion of morality, the promise of a dimly descried future. The wise shall repress instinct, without losing touch with the earth, their mother; shall hearken to intelligence, ask her for the rules of social well-being, but shall rise above them to follow the heroic intuitions of the heart. Thus, within the framework of nature and the seasons, the intense hours of life will leave us not in a discordant, but in a consonant state with the universe.

This message is lofty, and in itself able to call up high and pure intellectual emotions. The poetry of Meredith lends them as an instrument the resources of metre, boldly used in the most varied forms, with uneven success, admirable achievements, less felicitous licences, but without anything that may remind us of the most prosaic jars of Browning; and he still retains besides the means of expression of his prose, at a yet higher pitch of tension. His poetry thus possesses an extraordinary concentration, and compresses an excessive sum of stimulations and challenges into a minimum number of words. It is difficult, like his prose, and indeed more difficult. It reaches beautiful effects of the same order, with a more developed musical element; it is as fond of the ample sonorousness and of the general suggestiveness of learned words. Its most elaborate pieces are not the best; it

is when in contact with a simple emotion, and uttering relatively spontaneous accents, *that it avoids the maze of an obscure symbolism*, which it otherwise approaches dangerously, or indeed enters. Meredith has written masterpieces of a kind in which none of his contemporaries, except Rossetti, can be compared with him. But his poems will never be appreciated by more than a few; they are less accessible than his novels; and while he has expressed more of his philosophy in them, he has not poured into them any feelings of his poet's soul which his prose has not already abundantly revealed.

After having for a long time met only with a critical reception, Meredith was recognised, and at last hailed as a master; he was at the zenith of his fame on the morrow of his death. The ordinary decline has begun for him. The dogmatic opinions, the strong preferences of heart or mind, which his whimsical freedom ill succeeds in hiding, make him nowadays part and parcel of an age which was his, and against which he fought without escaping its sway. His inventions lack the artistic organisation towards which the present seems to be once more returning. The extremely rare and personal quality of his genius grows to an excess in peculiarities, even in mannerisms, which the passing of time makes more prominent. He has written a very large number of wonderful pages, thrown light on the psychology of an epoch, of a nation, of man, limned unforgettable portraits; but his novels, as architectural wholes, are not built on unexceptionable plans. Many parts of his work will age the sooner for it, although the future will probably rank him with the greatest writers of his time.

4. *The Pessimists: Thomson; Hardy; Gissing.*—The idea of progress had coalesced with the rational system of the Utilitarians and the evolutionists. The maxim of the greatest happiness of the greatest number not only defined a principle or an ideal, but expressed a confident hope. From the Darwinian struggle for life, Herbert Spencer had made out the trend of civilisation in its entirety towards a higher complexity which was at the same time a perfection. As a whole, the society of the mid-Victorian period accepted this philosophy, which made a prosperous age more intensely conscious of its success. The doctrine or the religion of universal mechanism had assumed a benign and optimistic look.

While the notion of necessity keeps its ascendancy, and with those very minds which most unreservedly bow to it, a *reaction* of sensibility takes place, however. It challenges, not indeed the absolutely binding succession of causes and effects, according to scientific determinism, but the value to man of a world thus governed. Pain is its response to a view of the universe which gave itself out as beneficent; it thus preludes to other responses, prepares the ground where they will grow, and secures a favourable atmosphere for them. The pessimism of Thomson, Hardy and Gissing acknowledges the mechanical conception of things as an intellectual truth; but it makes it incompatible with the peace of conscience, and thus, in the long run, makes it itself impossible; it is the beginning of a revolt against mechanism.

The second James Thomson [1] is a great poet. He is such naturally, is gifted with rare vigour, with an inborn sense of form. A son of the people, he never received the benefit of the finest culture. He makes up for it through his intuition; his rhythms, his style, instinctively aim at fullness, happiness of phrase, a sober and pure strength: they often reach their aim. But their merit is not of absolute solidity; the art has its flaws the artist's taste its deficiencies. The wonder is that his talent. self-taught as it was, should have tended to true perfection, through the errors of a superficial Romanticism, the chances of a cruel and disturbed existence.

He was born for joy, and did not seek his tragic fate out of a secret readiness. He tasted, and even sang, the pleasures of life. If his inspiration soon grew darker, and if he became the poet of pessimism, it was under the shock of incurable moral suffering,

[1] James Thomson, second poet of the same name (see above, Book III, chap. ii. sect. 2), born near Glasgow in 1834, the son of a sailor, experienced great hardship from his earliest years, was brought up in a charitable institution in London, a regimental schoolmaster, he was drafted to Ireland, and there fell in love with a young girl whose premature death came as a great blow, he also made the acquaintance of Bradlaugh (see above, Book VI. ii. 4), and returning to London in 1862 associated himself with the other's apostolate of free-thinking. After several attempts, he eked out a meagre existence with his pen; a victim to melancholia and fits of intemperance, he died in hospital in 1882. He had published in the *National Reformer* polemic articles, essays, verses, notably *The City of Dreadful Night* (1874); added this poem to others (1880); and further published *Vane's Story, Weddah and Om-el-Bonain*, etc., 1881, *Essays and Phantasies* (in prose), 1881. After his death appeared *Satires and Profanities* 1884, *Biographical and Critical Studies*, 1896, etc. *Poetical Works*, ed. by Dobell, 1895. *The City of Dreadful Night*, etc. (selected poems), 1910. See the biographies and studies by Dobell (*The Laureate of Pessimism*), 1910; Salt (*The Life of James Thomson*) 1914; Meeker, 1917.

and in consequence of a self-abandonment of the will, of periodic fits of intemperance, for which he was, doubtless, partly responsible, but to which he was driven as well by organic heredity.

His work is more varied than could be augured from the painful obsession betrayed by his greatest poem. He has delightful outpourings, light graces or eager raptures. *Sunday up the River*, a modern idyll, mingles touches of delicate dreaminess with a frankly plebeian humour. *He Heard Her Sing* is an ecstatic piece with the broad, strong sweep of an organ "largo." *Weddah and Om-el-Bonain*, an Oriental tale, full of Shelley's influence, along with its blemishes inlays tender, passionate images in charming lines.

But one central theme is the outstanding feature of Thomson's work: the pain of living, and the sombre majesty of despair. This motive is sketched in *To Our Ladies of Death*, receives in *Insomnia* a late and strikingly vivid variation, and is fully developed in *The City of Dreadful Night*, a series of symbolic visions.

The symbol is the image of a city of darkness, where the beings set apart by the loss of every hope dwell together. It dissolves like an illusion of night in the light of day; but in the gloom of the grieving soul it is ever built up again; for its architecture is that of dreams; it is made of the fabric of our imaginings. Down its streets, furrows of heavy dusk, ghosts move mingled with the living; and on the banks of the river of suicides which flows through it, in the dark temple where the gospel of annihilation is preached to human suffering, the inmates of the city obey their obsessing impulses, or whisper to one another the secrets of their sorrowful fraternity. The various aspects of the bitter renunciation to life, to joy, are called up in scenes or meditations whose strong concentrated power strikes our imaginations with an unforgettable nightmare.

Thomson found, thanks to his instinctive art, the fit means for the full realisation of his poetical fancy: stanzas of varied texture, borrowed from the verse-writers of the past, but all stamped anew with the imprint of his personality, directed towards a converging effect by the similitude of their tone—the same thoughtful amplitude, accompanied and confirmed by the sounding echo of the rhymes; and a language instinct with dense,

harsh energy, now and then relieved by the biblical or oratorical solemnity of archaisms or Latin adjectives.

His personality has other aspects; there was in him a polemic of free thought and democratic action, sincere, but of inferior literary quality; an essayist; a critic with just, vivid perceptions, who has known how to recognise new merits, and to renew the appreciation of old ones; and a prose-writer who displays, like the poet, an accurate discriminating sense of the values of words.

With Thomas Hardy,[1] the reaction of a robust nature against a philosophy that was too easily self-satisfied assumes the character of one of those complete breaks, through which men of energetic temperament will stand up against their times. In some respects there is in him a Rousseau, as extreme in his revolt, but different in his self-mastery, his massive dignity, his admixture of calm with bitterness. Not only does he deny the hope of a happiness founded upon the progress of critical reason; it is the whole of modern civilisation that he condemns, and his sore heart seeks, as a wounded animal would, the shelter of the most primitive and untouched earth.

Brought up to the profession of architect, he receives a mixed culture, in which precise notions, the sense of volumes and of equilibrium, are joined to a process of artistic refining; he gets

[1] Thomas Hardy, born near Dorchester in 1840, prepared himself for the pro- ... literature in 1867 He first ... story · *Desperate Remedies*, ... *e Eyes*, 1873; *Far from the* ... *The Return of the Native*, ... *Two on a Tower*, 1882; ... 1887; *Wessex Tales*, 1888; ... 1891; *A Group of Noble Dames*, 1891; *Life's Little Ironies*, 1894; *Jude the Obscure*, 1896 The success of the earlier idylls was kept up, then grew with *Tess*, but the welcome given to *Jude* discouraged the novelist; he published nothing more save *The Well-Beloved* (which had already appeared in a periodical), 1897; *A Changed Man*, etc., 1913. The poet came into the front rank with his *Wessex Poems*, etc., 1898; *Poems of the Past and Present*, 1902; *The Dynasts* (Part I., 1904; II., 1906; III., 1908); *Time's Laughing-Stocks*, etc., 1909; *Satires of Circumstance*, etc., 1914; *Moments of Vision*, 1917. He died in 1928. *Works*, Wessex ed ; Pocket ed. (Harper); *Collected Poems*, 1919. See the studies by L. Johnson (*The Art of Thomas Hardy*), 1894, new ed., 1923; Hedgcok (*Thomas Hardy, Penseur et Artiste*), 1911; Lea (*Thomas Hardy's Wessex*), 1913; Abercrombie, 1912; H. Child, 1916; L. W. Berle, 1917; H. C. Duffin (*Thomas Hardy, a Study of the Wessex Novels*), 1916, M. L. Cazamian (*Roman et Idées en Angleterre*), 1923; J. W. Beach (*The Technique of Thomas Hardy*), 1923; E. Brennecke, *T. Hardy's Universe*, 1924; H B. Grimsditch, *Character and Environment in the Novels of T. Hardy*, 1925; P. Braybrooke, *T. Hardy and His Philosophy*, 1928; S. C. Chew, *T. Hardy, Poet and Novelist*, 1928.

at the same time acquainted with the material structure of the world, and with the æsthetic character of its outlines. To this apprenticeship of intelligence and sensibility, he joins the awakening of imagination through the influence of history. The deeper foundations of his thought are those of the Victorian mind: positive data, a respect for science, curiosity as to the cosmic and human past. Upon this basis, others about him were raising the cult of omnipotent evolution, of fruitful industry, of pacific democracy. His original instinct, after a quick transition, settles in a coherent system of directly opposed beliefs, which at times are formulated, at times remain latent, and are revealed only through powerful concrete expressions.

He accepts science, and feels its spell, but joylessly. His tastes lead him away from the fever and fret of industry. A meditative and solitary man, he keeps in harmony with the austere though verdant countryside of Dorsetshire, where he spent his boyhood; and it is there, in retirement, that his life develops, uneventful except for the stages of his work. His books almost ignore the new facts of the present-day world; their background is the eternal framework of the hills and the moors; all their vistas open upon those simple, unchanging realities, the neighbourhood of which throws light on the true relationship between the universe and man.

This relationship unites two terms of rather similar essence, but of very unequal power. Hardy's philosophy grows out of reflection and experience before he is acquainted with Schopenhauer; from an early time, he feels an obscure volition in the depths of things, and curbs our individual destinies under a law greater than ourselves. At a later stage, he readily adopts the theory of an immanent will seeking unconscious ends through a blind striving. Everywhere in his novels human beings appear to us crushed by a superior force: that of nature, at first, and of an indifferent, so most often a hostile chance; then, that of the errors implied in our own desires. Whether his creed is fatalism or determinism, he is haunted by the vision of necessity. He grasps it grandly, like a tragic poet, and illustrates it with unwearied persistence.

As an artist, he finds himself soon enough, but he shows regressive phases, and a rather sinuous line of development. His novels can be divided into groups, from one to another of



Thomas Hardy at the age of forty.

which, on the whole, he passed. The first are of a lighter or more traditional build, showing either a predominance of the plot (*Desperate Remedies, The Hand of Ethelberta*, etc.), or the traces of a fanciful invention in the action and the characters (*A Pair of Blue Eyes, The Trumpet Major*, etc.). The essential originality of his temperament is included in half a dozen books of a more deliberate realism, of a closer psychology, where under a varying, but gradually dimmer light, the more and more dramatic struggle between man and the evil in things is waged (*Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, The Woodlanders, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Jude the Obscure*).

They all are novels of provincial, and even rustic life; for if the scene is sometimes shifted from the country to the towns, these are sleeping boroughs or cities, flooded by the influences of the fields. Oxford, the great University, which lifts its towers and spires on the horizon, is to the north the boundary of the agricultural country, hardly eaten into by the fever of modern manners, whose heart is Hardy's own Dorsetshire, and for which he has kept its old name of "Wessex." Through these lands of memory, where hills will bear Roman camps, and where barrows will conceal even more ancient remnants, the fates are unrolled of heroes placed in a lower or middle condition. The most frequent types are those of peasants and professional men, the latter having themselves risen from the people. Hardy has a preference for characters of a sturdy and painful intellectuality, won over the hard heredity of a family rooted to the soil.

His plots are not simple. They grow out of elementary passions: ambition, greed, love, jealousy, the thirst for knowledge; and the springs which move them are psychological. More and more as he progresses in his career, Hardy tends to shift the construction of his novels to the inner world; he writes a moral drama, shows us a conflict of contradictory wills, guided themselves by feelings. But the development of these conflicts is crossed at every moment by accidents which interrupt them. Ironical, malevolent, fatal chance is as it were an invisible third party in all the relationships of human beings; now it seems to express an obscure cruelty lurking in the universe; now, in a more philosophical guise, it is the experimental revelation of laws which individuals in their self-deception ignore, and against

which probability demands that they should be some day crushed. In this latter sense, chance becomes the chastisement of the unavoidable selfishness of every life. Whether one aspect or the other is predominant, the repeated working of that inimical luck is largely responsible for the tragic atmosphere which Hardy's heroes succeed but rarely in escaping.

And yet theirs are strong-willed souls. The solitude and concentration of country habits have saved them from the dispersion and constant wear that eat up the town-dweller. There are some among them whose vitality has been impaired by reflection, by art, and the exhausting work of the intelligence; but their energy dies hard, and the deadly strain is a long time conquering them. Clym Yeobright, Henchard, Jude, are three different aspects of that rustic robustness, struggling against the experience of pain or the disease of thought. The women of Hardy are closer to the instinctive stage, more elementary as it were in good or evil; he has wanted to make them either the tools of the life-force, or the victims, easily overcome, of a cruel fate rendered heavier by the sensibility of their hearts.

However interesting they may be—and many among them are original figures, with strong unforgettable features—the characters of Hardy do not bear the stamp of a faultless art. They are laboriously constructed, and from the outside; their creator is not under the immediate spell of intuition. In this field he is the architect rather than the poet; the building is sound, but its frame and joints are visible. There occur, in the development of these beings, sudden crises and breaks, angles one might say, where one feels an arbitrary decision rather than an inevitable growth. Quite other characteristics prevail in the descriptions and the painting of the background. There it is that Hardy is most certainly and constantly inspired.

From his earliest works, he tried his hand at the delineation of landscape; and while he at first added nothing new to the theme, he showed freshness, an accuracy of touch and tone which bespeaks an intimate knowledge of the country. The idyllic scenes in *Far from the Madding Crowd* are worthy of being compared with the most genuine pictures that English prose had yet produced in that line. With *The Return of the Native, The Woodlanders, Tess,* we come upon effects more powerful and of a rarer quality, aimed at with a sure and certain skill. A great

poet of nature there freely displays an exceptional gift for description, which owes a vast range to the perception both of fine shades and of vast solemn harmonies.

What strikes us first in these pictures is their precision. Hardy has the acute discriminating senses of an observer who takes in things with an attention at the same time analytical and impassioned. His records of impressions owe nothing to literature; they are wholly direct, and grow out of the object itself; as they formulate what only the most impressionable peasants would subconsciously register, they extend our knowledge at many points. No one before him has caught, or at least expressed through words, the peculiar rustling of the wind in the tiny bells of dried heather blossoms. Such extremely delicate perceptions, however, are not so striking as are some broad, strong intuitions, in which imagination has its share. The special aspect of particular regions, the picturesque essence of an individual landscape, are seen and rendered with unfailing felicity. And just as those creations reveal the deepest tendencies in the writer's temperament, his tastes are secretly guiding the preferences of his sight. Hardy has most fondly described the elementary, grand and sad aspects of nature; the land which appeals to him most is that which is freest from human dwellings; he loves the sea, but does not often describe it, not finding himself sufficiently familiar with its moods; he loves more to paint the woods, where the seasons go through the infinitely varied circle of their changes far from all profane onlookers; the vales, the rich pastures, the sober hills of his native district; the bare uplands where the furrow of a Roman road runs straight and empty to the horizon; and the gloomy vastness of the moor, in which every living being vanishes, as if swallowed up in the depth of the centuries whose image is called up by its immobility.

Description, when it reaches this degree of symbolic breadth, is loaded with philosophy. Hardy's gaze perceives time as well as space. The past of the world casts a spiritual but visible shadow over the surface of a globe grown old, where the brightest rays are shorn of the gaiety of young light. The ashes of the dead fertilise the mould, and give the flowers their beauty: the ploughshare brings up the tools, the arms of the first masters of a soil which we believe ours, and whose aspect is to us familiar and reassuring, because we are not acquainted with the lugubrious

dramas that are hidden in it. To see spring bloom or autumn ripen, is to call up within the *only scenery that is unchanged* the long history of mankind, still galled by the same passions, overwhelmed by the same fate, vainly seeking a cure for its anguish in an aimless agitation. Hardy's pessimism is not only a way of thinking; lived by his most instinctive sensibility, it imbues all his visions; it is the very essence of his admirable poetry of nature.

His last novels are the most hopeless. What had been a general bent of mind is accentuated here by coming into contact with moral or social problems. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* calmly calls up the sufferings which the inequality of the sexes and the hasty indifference of the law add to the evils that the flesh inherits. *Jude the Obscure* is the most powerful of the books in which the fatigue of modern vitality has expressed, exemplified and justified itself in principle. Hardy here renounces whatever alleviation, were it a sad one, the attention paid to landscape brought to the bitter spectacle of human pains. He draws closer to complete realism, free from all violence, but destitute as well of all secret leaning to indulgence, than does any of his contemporaries; and the example of French naturalism is probably not without some influence upon this change. The story of an intellectual vocation, struggling against the yoke of fleshly appetites, against the open or hidden hostility of a materialist world, and the inner doubt which cripples all effort, rises to the height of the most sincere art. The style, however, unable to thoroughly emulate such moral courage, reveals some deficiencies; it possesses no spontaneous perfection, no easy rhythm, and as it grows heedless of beauty, recedes too far away from it. But in spite of its slow progress, and somewhat heavy material, this work is thrilling with the humanity which permeates it to the core. It offers us in the character of Sue a deeply studied and prophetic portrait of a girl in whom the conflict between brain and instinct is endued with the unstable charm of complexity. With this book Hardy took his leave of the novel, a literary kind whose limits his dismayed public seemed to signify he had stretched too far.

Thereafter he published hardly anything but poems. With him, the unity of temperament which makes the poet and the

prose-writer one man is exceptionally obvious. The difference in manner is attenuated by the deep analogy of inspiration, by marked and characteristic habits of thought and language. The expression in the poems, however, is more compact than that in the novels; restrained within narrower bounds, it acquires a peculiar involution; it has to lend itself, not without a perceptible strain, to a measure which has not been created at the same time, and for it. Rarely do we meet with an inevitable rhythm, with pieces whose music is inseparable from their suggestion. Hardy has incorporated in his novels some fragments which had first been written in verse; many of his poems, conversely, are not essentially distinguishable from prose. (Beauty springs here from the powerful concentration, the economy of words, the severe choice of epithets and images; from a vocabulary rough and singularly rich in associations, through its large number of old Saxon roots, and of words racy of the soil. Abounding as it is in striking phrases, whose meditative echo long reverberates within us, this austere poetry is one of the most vigorous and personal in modern English literature.)

(It sings the same poignant, bitter and restrained feelings as live at the core of the novelist's tragic tales; and as it sings them with a more audacious directness, the poems of Hardy yet more frankly reveal the secret of his pessimism. They give us the reaction of his thought to events, discreet hints as to his sentimental life, a summary account of his readings and his travels; they are a precious document towards his moral biography. The abhorrence of war, the manifold consciousness of human misery, the moving metaphysical realisation of an unknown God and an impassive universe, the painful thrill of time, the curiosity and obsession of past centuries, are with a rich humour the main aspects of this philosophical lyricism.

The philosophy which animates it, and which already found its favourite stimulus in history, has expressed itself more fully in the original form of a dramatic epic poem founded on history. *The Dynasts* is a work of the broadest scope, imposing through its general conception, through the framework of ideas which supports the actual fate of nations and kings, the fight between Napoleon and Europe, and, beyond that earthly battlefield, the symbolic impressions of supernatural onlookers. The effort is

of unequalled boldness; the most precise fact in it mixes with the freest imagination, the rigid outline of an event with the fluidity of mystic vision; the effect as a whole is strange and grand. Long stage directions in prose now and again break the lines. Here once more, the manner has not the easy suppleness of happy art; it hardens into rough edges and irregular rhythms. The force of an inner glow of ironical and pathetic ardour, which heats, animates and raises such a mass, though it fails to melt it into one pure and coherent alloy, awakes a respectful and serious admiration in the reader. The characters, while they are not all studied with equal care, are interesting, even if some of them can hardly be accepted historically. The light that falls from heaven upon this succession of moving scenes sets off eloquent contrasts and brings out vivid climaxes among them. The voices of the invisible witnesses draw the lesson of bitter resignation, which Hardy has been ever teaching, from that series of catastrophes governed by an indifferent Fate; but here, a glimmer of hope dawns in the darkness; as some of the poems had already hinted, the blind force that drives the world seems to be gradually growing conscious; and we are allowed to look forward to a future when a less insensible Will may preside over our destiny.

Nothing is more instructive than to compare Gissing[1] with Dickens. In spite of striking analogies, their works have quite different tones. The unavoidable oppositions between personal artists contribute much to this difference; but something is due

[1] George Robert Gissing, born at Wakefield in 1857, studied at Owens College, Manchester, was destined for the teaching profession. An imprudent marriage ruined his career; he experienced great privations in America and in London; from 1880 onwards he lived by giving lessons and performing tasks for publishers, in a state of poverty which only increased with time. His writings met with no success at first, then won the esteem of an élite. His novels include: *Workers in the Dawn*, 1880; *The Unclassed*, 1884; *Isabel Clarendon*, 1886; *Demos*, 1886; *Thyrza*, 1887; *A Life's Morning*, 1888; *The Nether World*, 1889; *The Emancipated*, 1889; *New Grub Street*, 1891; *Born in Exile*, 1892; *Denzil Quarrier*, 1892; *The Odd Women*, 1893; *In the Year of Jubilee*, 1894; *Sleeping Fires*, 1895; *The Whirlpool*, 1897; *Our Friend the Charlatan*, 1901; *Veranilda*, 1904, etc.; short tales: *Human Odds and Ends*, 1898, etc.; travel impressions and essays: *By the Ionian Sea*, 1901; *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, 1903; critical studies: *Charles Dickens*, 1898; *Forster's Life of Dickens*, abridged and revised, 1903, etc. After a second marriage, also unhappy, he found a devoted and considerate mate in a Frenchwoman, and died, despite her efforts to save him, in the Pyrenees in 1903. See Swinnerton, *George Gissing*, 1912; May Yates, *George Gissing*, 1922; M. L. Cazamian, *Roman et Idées en Angleterre*, 1923; *Letters of G. to Members of His Family*, 1927.

as well to the distinct tempers of two successive ages. Gissing, like his revered master, early received the stamp of social suffering; his youth underwent severer trials. Bitterness sank to the core of his nature, and permeated all his fibres: it became the very food of his imagination. If the outlook of his thought was thus darkened, while Dickens had preserved his courageous cheerfulness, the reason is first that there was not in him the triumphant surge of humour, the will, and the strength, to create joy by means of an invincible illusion. But on the other hand the atmosphere of his days fostered the genius which inclined him to pessimism. He inhaled the doctrine of Schopenhauer, and assimilated it; he was confirmed in his realism by the example of writers whom science had marked with its austere stamp. It is certain that he felt the influence of the French naturalistic movement—from Flaubert to Zola. A contemporary of Maupassant, he infused like him, into the pitiless determination to see and to point out the truth, the sadness of a closing century, exhausted with cruel certitude, afflicted with the profound starvation of its most spiritual desires.

Dickens had depicted evil in order to seek, in order to announce its cure; each abuse called for a reform; behind the selfishness of the wicked, the charity of the good shone, contagious and reassuring. Gissing describes the diseases of society without any hope of curing them. He believes neither in the philanthropy of the rich, nor in the revolt of the poor. The career of a plebeian agitator *(Demos)* teaches us the vanity of the socialist dream. There do exist some generous and pure beings; but few they are, and unhappy, the victims of a society built on greed, indifference or hatred. This sombre philosophy inspires to the end a work and a life which in their last stage show a perceptibly relaxed strain, without ever being freed from sadness.

Gissing's best novels are those in which he has most strictly focused his attention on the classes whose intimate knowledge and haunting horror he preserved within himself; whether the poverty studied is that of the London slums *(Demos, The Nether World)*, or of starving writers *(New Grub Street)*; or again, crossing the limit between the two worlds, he relates the adventurous career of a son of the people who, through no other means but his ambitious intelligence, wins acceptance for himself among

the elect *(Born in Exile)*. On one occasion, he was attracted by a special problem, the woman question, and treated it from the point of view of the middle class *(The Odd Women)*. With varying concentration and intensity, the same heavy atmosphere hangs over those tales; they are, as it were, the several episodes of one harsh prose epic, that of the suffering implied in the social order, or in human nature.

No one has drawn a more striking, nor in some respects a more exact image of the joyless surroundings among which the lives of the most numerous class are set in London. His realism is only partly rooted in the instincts of his nature; in him the Romanticism of his early years is quivering, still full of life, under the discipline of a will which denies itself the right to feel, because feeling is the refuge of the weak, and entices the mind away from truth. But if realism with him is not part and parcel of his most spontaneous artistic impulses, it is put into practice by a reflective intelligence; it is remarkably robust and sincere. While it is courageous, it is laboured as well; and this conscientiousness is not free from a touch of heaviness. The picture of a mediocre reality is made up of deliberate strokes of the brush, with painstaking precision; each stroke shows us its object with an accuracy which reveals at the same time the correct vision of clear-sighted eyes, and the determination of a mind which has exorcised all fallacies from its outlook. A strong, crushing impression of infinitely sad truth emanates from those images; the sadder, as even the poetry of an inverted idealisation, of a dramatic intensifying of ugliness, is almost nowhere to be found in them.

It is not always wanting, however; Gissing sometimes, in spite of himself, or willingly, indulges in imaginative renderings. As if he confessed the bankruptcy of that absolute realism which is the gospel of one of his heroes (Biffen, in *New Grub Street)*, and the unbearable monotony of a perspective ever deprived of all human reactions, he will now and then interpret reality, compress it into shortened views, magnify it into symbols; he discreetly pours out upon it the passion with which his soul is overflowing. Then it is that the drab objectivity of the story assumes its full value; it throbs with a moving eloquence, and the gloomy atmosphere is shot through with tragic gleams.

Gissing's heroes are studied patiently, conscientiously, from the outside, with an uneven penetration, which often reaches only the largest springs of their moral being, but even then reconstructs its mechanism with logical accuracy; which sometimes again, thanks to a more direct intuition, made up of sympathy or hatred, and pregnant with the tacit avowals of a wounded personality, creates characters of a profound or subtle truth. No one of these persons is the author himself; but several are connected by sore fibres with his feeling of self. The Godwin Peak of *Born in Exile*, the Reardon and the Biffen of *New Grub Street*, the Sidney Kirkwood of *The Nether World*, owe part of their convincing power to the bitter experience of the unjust decrees through which nature and society will crush noble ambitions: in the same way, a Jasper Milvain owes his truth to the author's acute perception of the easy virtues through which some lax consciences believe they deserve their brilliant rewards, and do deserve them in the eyes of the world, thus depriving a scrupulous and obscure rival of the last revenge which his pride could expect, the pleasure of despising them.

artistic quality; the critical or personal essays, such as the study of Dickens, and the *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. These writings testify to a felicitous variety of talents, in an author who might seem condemned to a cheerless monotony.

His premature death prevented Gissing from reaping the full benefit of his gifts. He might have still renewed himself. But probably he had already stamped his personality most durably on the novel. He will live as the most sincere expression, through his strong and his weaker features, of one of the darkest moments in modern social thought.

On the contrary, with another realist, inclined as well to painful meditation, the sincerity of a tender conscience did not exclude resignation to life. The pessimism of Hale White[1] is a discreet flavour, so much mingled with charity, and even with love, that its bitterness tends to vanish. His creations have neither the abundance nor the strength of those of Gissing; they are restricted to a narrow circle. The range of one class, the dissenting lower middle; of one psychological problem, the conflict of the craving for truth with faith, with action and happiness, circumscribes them all. But within this modest field, the drama which is enacted is that of human destiny, in the shape which it owes to the spiritual sufferings of our age. The *Autobiography* and the *Deliverance* of Mark Rutherford hardly relate anything but the experience of a soul that gives itself away altogether, an experience connected by the simplest incidents with some delicately painted episodic characters; the poetry or the nobleness of those tales springs from their intimate idealism. After the torments of religious doubt, they tell the assuagement which the will to goodness may find in the concentration on the proximate duties of life. Other studies by the same writer, more objective, have not the poignant intensity or the vivid appeal of the former. Those two books, written under a fictitious name by the most secretive of authors, have created a moral type, and exemplified

[1] William Hale White, born at Bedford in 1830, prepared to enter the ministry of his sect, but was debarred on account of his too free ideas on biblical inspiration; he published pseudonymously *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*, 1881; *Mark Rutherford's Deliverance*, 1885; *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, 1887; *Miriam's Schooling*, 1890, etc.; under his own name, a translation of Spinoza (1877); a study on Bunyan, 1905; the elements for a real story of his life: *Pages from a Journal*, etc., 1900; *The Early Life of Mark Rutherford, by Himself*, 1913. He died in 1913. See A. E. Taylor, "The Novels of Mark Rutherford," *English Association Essays and Studies*, vol. v., 1914; M. L. Cazamian, *Roman et Idées en Angleterre*, 1923; Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, *Memories of Mark Rutherford*, 1924.

in its unforgettable image the anguish, perhaps the cure, of many minds.[1]

To be consulted: Gilbert Cannan, *Samuel Butler*, etc., 1915; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. xiii. chaps. iv. xiv.; vol. xiv. chap. i.; M. L. Cazamian, *Roman et Idées en Angleterre*, 1923; J. W. Cunliffe, *English Literature During the Last Half-Century*, 1920; O. Elton, *Survey of English Literature, 1830-80*, 1920; A. Fouillée, *Le Mouvement idéaliste et la Réaction contre la Science positive*, 1896; R. Galland, *George Meredith*, etc., 1923; [illegible] 1890-1914, 1920.

[1] Pessimistic inspiration, mingled with other veins—the influence of Pre-Raphaelite refinement and disquietude, chiefly—rises to the surface in the work of two other poets, whose too easy talent is not without personality: Arthur O'Shaughnessy (1844-81): *Poems*, selected and edited by W. A. Percy, 1923. P. B. Marston (1850-87): *Song-tide, etc.*, 1871; *Wind Voices*, 1883, etc.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW ROMANTICISM

1. *Swinburne.*—Just as neo-classicism with Matthew Arnold was steeped in a persistent Romanticism, with Swinburne[1] Neo-Romanticism includes within one and the same ardour the most diverse inspirations, among which is to be found the impassioned worship of Greek and classical beauty. The author of *Atalanta in Calydon* and *Poems and Ballads* yet holds, like that of *Merope*, a distinct place in the development of literature. Against the composite background upon which a century saturated with actions and reactions thenceforth traces the successive phases of taste, he stands out with the vigorous outline of a dominant characteristic. Through his immediate connections he is linked

[1] Algernon Charles Swinburne, born in London in 1837, studied at Eton and Oxford, and published without success two dramas of Shakespearean inspiration: *The Queen Mother* and *Rosamond* (1860). Two dramas of a different spirit, *Atalanta in Calydon*, and *Chastelard* (1865), were not unnoticed. The first was followed at a later date by *Erechtheus* (1876); the second by *Bothwell* (1874) and *Mary Stuart* (1881). The *Poems and Ballads* of 1866, meanwhile, provoked a scandal. Swinburne identified himself with the Pre-Raphaelite movement, and enthusiastically upheld the cause of Italian independence (*A Song of Italy*, 1867; *Songs Before Sunrise*, 1871). From 1879 until his death (1909) he lived in retirement near London with his friend, Theodore Watts-Dunton, the critic and poet. His further publications include collections of verse or poems: *Songs of Two Nations*, 1875; *Poems and Ballads*, Second Series, 1875; idem, Third Series, 1889; *Songs of the Springtides*, 1880; *Studies in Song*, 1880; *Tristram of Lyonesse*, 1882; *A Century of Roundels*, 1883; *A Midsummer Holiday*, 1884; *Astrophel*, 1894; *The Tale of Balen*, 1896, etc.; dramas: *Marino Faliero*, 1885; *Locrine*, 1887; *The Sisters*, 1892; *Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards*, 1899. In prose he wrote: *William Blake, a Critical Essay*, 1868; *Essays and Studies*, 1875; *George Chapman, a Critical Essay*, 1875; *A Note on Charlotte Brontë*, 1877; *A Study of Shakespeare*, 1880; *Miscellanies*, 1886; *A Study of Victor Hugo*, 1886; *A Study of Ben Jonson*, 1889; *Studies in Prose and Poetry*, 1894, etc. His French work, for the most part unpublished, is considerable. *Poems*, 1904; *Tragedies*, 1905-6; *Selections* (ed. by himself), 1887. See the biography by Gosse, 1917; studies by Woodberry, 1905; Elton (*Modern Studies*), 1907; Richter (*Swinburne's Verhältniss zu Frankreich und Italien*), 1911; Thomas (*Algernon Charles Swinburne, a Critical Study*), 1912; Drinkwater (*Swinburne, an Estimate*), 1913; Welby (*Swinburne, a Critical Study*), 1914; Henderson (*Swinburne and Landor*), 1918; de Ruel (*L'Œuvre de Swinburne*), 1922; MacInnes (*L'Œuvre française de Swinburne*), in preparation; A. Galimberti, 1925; H. Nicolson, 1926; G. Lafourcade, *Le Jeunesse de Swinburne*, 1928; id., *Keats and Swinburne*, 1928.

with the more refined aspects of Victorian poetry; the direct influence of Pre-Raphaelitism is upon him; but he goes beyond this movement, or rather he extends its limits. A broader and fuller intensity, an eagerness of desire which recalls Shelley's youthful enthusiasm, an uncompromising audacity in revolt, all point, at the time when the Victorian feeling of balance is beginning to question itself, to the renascence of an avowed Romanticism.

No less than he prolongs an impulse, Swinburne is a precursor as well. He continues the generation of Byron, Shelley, Keats, Landor. His themes most often seem to echo theirs: the exaltation of freedom, of the efforts of oppressed nationalities—the Italy of Mazzini and Cavour being substituted for Hellas; hostility to authoritative religions, the negation of dogma, pantheistic leanings; the love of sensuous beauty, of the Middle Ages, and of pagan civilisations. To that sheaf of tendencies, he adds a few more novel ones, through which he betokens the spirit of the declining century: a rebellion against the rule of Puritanism, and against the subjection of letters to the tone of social life; the frank admission of passional subjects in art. The Romanticism of 1820 had already foreshadowed that endeavour; next, among the aims of the Pre-Raphaelites, the idealisation of sensuality had found a place, and Rossetti was to be denounced shortly after.[1] But the *Poems and Ballads* of 1866 opened through Victorian reticence the breach which, gradually widened, eventually let in the flood of decadent literature.

Here, again, Swinburne shows more initiative than invention. He is no creator. Whereas English opinion since the Revolution of 1789 had grown generally hostile to influences from France, he yields to them. An assimilative temperament, he welcomes from his earliest years the lessons of the Ancients, of the Elizabethans, of the Romanticists; he accepts as well those of the contemporary French writers. He is a devoted admirer of Victor Hugo, worships him as one of the greatest masters of language; he relishes the piquant graces of Théophile Gautier. From Baudelaire, however, he receives the most subtle teaching. Through his lyrical work there runs a vein of conscious morbidity; the frenzy of passion, the proud bitterness of satiety, the tragic or sinister aspects of destruction, lend it many of its characteristic

[1] See above, Book VI. chap. iv. sect. 4.

accents. In a somewhat diluted and attenuated form, one catches there the echoing tones of Baudelaire's pessimism.

Of all those mingled elements the temperament of Swinburne is made up. The art to which it tends is a Romanticism enriched and altered by the psychological experience and the intellectuality of half a century; it is Symbolism, brilliant examples of which were being offered him in their several manners by Gautier, Baudelaire and the Victor Hugo of the Guernsey period. His poetry is all instinct with an effort to seize the inner and not only the apparent meaning of natural forms; to listen with a tranquil and meditative soul to their silent voice; to render emotions, in the same way, by transferred expressions, more interesting than direct ones; and to turn nature into a manifold evocation of the great riddles of mind. Suggestion is the indispensable and most efficient instrument of such an art; for it utilises the indirect elements of significance which belong to words as to images; and thus the aspects of nature, and the sounds of the words that express them, become the resources of a new technique, which ever aims at conveying some deeper and more subtle thing beyond its immediate object. Now, as this depth and this subtlety possess, of necessity, a note of intimacy and delicacy, and the value of fleeting and rare, or at least personal shades, it is Impressionism, the complement and habitual counterpart of Symbolism, that already is adumbrated in the experiments and intentions of Swinburne. Here once more Rossetti, on English soil, had been his predecessor.

If he had exploited those new resources to the full, he would have been one of those writers of genius around whom a whole generation can be organised. A very considerable poet, Swinburne yet is not the centre of his literary age. He lacked, to be such, the determination and sureness of instinct. Half transformed as it is by the æsthetics of Symbolism, his art still remains involved in Romanticism pure and simple. What matters even more, among the possible instruments of Symbolism, his temperament evinces a radical preference, in which a weakness is betrayed; he chooses the most accessible, though not always the most superficial one: the luxuriant fluency and the musicalness of vocabulary. It is almost exclusively from the dazzling abundance and sonorous quality of words that he expects the suggestion which will gather

round poetic expression, prolonging and amplifying it. This tendency may have been encouraged by Victor Hugo's verbal virtuosity; still, it is spontaneous with Swinburne, and carries him farther than it did his master. So completely does he surrender to the intoxication of language, that his inspiration, very often, seems to follow no other guidance. The development of each poem, constructed on a simple impression or idea, obeys neither a principle of mental logic, nor an artistic judgment; it is shapeless, indefinite, monotonous, and stops only from exhaustion. Ceaselessly taken up again, the theme is illustrated by a profusion of images, itself governed by a profusion of words. It is the word which stands at the very centre of the thought, like the motive in a symphony; through its meaning, and chiefly through its colour and sound, it possesses a peculiar magnetism, which attracts certain other vocables, and, by means of these, other feelings and other ideas. This attraction acts through the normal channel of rhyme: but rhyme is very far from meeting all his needs; alliteration, whose sway extends over several words in the same line, is at the very heart of Swinburne's poetical rhetoric; it is not unfrequently the controlling force of his inspiration. A sound, a chord, connected by an elementary affinity with an aspect of nature and with a mood, are thus, as in music, the real origin of many poems, whose frames they build up through their recurrence.

Such a method is acceptable in itself, chiefly when associated with a special order of poetry, and it has been given its consecration by frequent use in contemporary literature. But Swinburne, although in one sense he carries it very far, does not practise it in its true spirit, or with much originality. A musician, he remains at the same time an orator. Whilst his words are the notes in a melody, they are still intellectual signs: and though this will necessarily happen with all poets, the difficult fusion of the musical with the logical expressions, a feat in which the most consummate artists show their mastery, is hardly achieved here but by impoverishing them both. Swinburne's thought is vehement, but simple; it rarely leaves the field of commonplaces. Beyond the explicit themes, sincere in their ardour, but insufficiently renewed and personal, the indirect suggestions which his symbolism offers us are of a rather limited range, either in variety or in delicacy.

The most interesting—those for instance which he associates with some strangely desolate landscapes of the southern or eastern English coast—are repeated to satiety. His music, on the other hand, is wonderfully easy and brilliant, but not of the most winning or the most ethereal kind. His ear, although very susceptible and safe in many respects, has not the richest or the most exquisite range as compared with those of other English poets. His metrical displays are extraordinarily spirited and successful; he has handled with efficiency a vast number of measures and stanzas; an incomparable writer of verse at the beginning of his career, he remains such to the end. There it is perhaps that Swinburne has most certainly been an innovator; he has added to the prosodic scope of English poetry. His ease, unfortunately, results too often in profuseness; and he knows too rarely how to secure for an effect the supreme virtue of moderation.

His whole art is thus swayed by the predominance of one mental power, and that not the highest. His temperament, however abundantly gifted, had not received all gifts. When closely examined, the limitations of his genius are found to be intimately connected with an inner contrast which runs through his very being. In the boldest aims and intuitions of his poetry, he is a man of his own time, nervous, high-strung, excitable, already attuned to the coming age. By the whole of his character, on the other hand, he is related to the most ancient tradition of his race. His instincts at bottom are akin to those of the psychological line of descent which, deriving from the Anglo-Saxon type, continues through the centuries, and reappears, in more or less modified forms, down to recent times. Some affinities are thus revealed between him and Kipling. He loves the sea, the wind, elementary forces, with a less spiritual, more physical and primitive passion than that of Shelley. He feels the spell of the drear, harsh landscapes in which the imagination of the Saxon seamen revolved. The enervating curiosities, the intellectualised sensations to which he seems to tend at one time, do not answer the deepest truth of his nature; he is too simple and traditional to be satisfied with decadence. We thus see him without wonder gradually shake off the affected perversity which at first shocked his readers, and move towards a kind of poetry, and feelings, that savour of orthodoxy; reconcile his republican faith with

a patriotic admiration for Queen Victoria; demand freedom for Italy, while he refuses it to Ireland; and prelude in verse to Kipling's imperialism.

In the luxuriance of his metrical effusions there are moments of mastery, and points of perfection; at such times a fuller emotion, a more poignant sense of the beauty of things, check their own expression before it has run to excess; or, as the case may be, a firmer and more lucid artistic intent controls a more balanced development in a calmer mind. Swinburne has written short masterpieces; these are not of the highest order, but no other than himself could have written them.

They are to be found as early as the first series of *Poems and Ballads,* but chiefly in the second and the third; in the *Songs Before Sunrise,* in the two dramas composed in imitation of Greek tragedy (*Atalanta, Erechtheus*), where such a genuine perception of Hellenism, such a true enthusiasm for classical beauty, are but rather imperfectly welded into a whole with an entirely modern inspiration. The mixture strikes one as artificial, and very different from its model, although the difference leaves it its worth. There are in the choruses of those dramas admirable pieces, universally known. It is still in its lyricism that the worth of Swinburne's poetry here resides; and lyricism remains everywhere the very soul of his work, extensive as the range of the subjects and kinds may be. His genius is not philosophical; least of all is it dramatic. His narrative, descriptive, elegiac poems acquire animation and rise to a higher level as soon as in their progress they can catch on to one of the favourite themes—the sea, the joy of effort, the glory of life and the universality of death, the procession of the seasons, the power and the fragility of love, upon which his unwearied fancy weaves symphonic variations. To the end, the abundance and the quality of that production are astonishing. The series inspired by the Arthurian legends (*Tristram of Lyonesse*) bears being compared with Tennyson's *Idylls of the King.* The trilogy which revolves round Queen Mary Stuart is interesting, not through the studies of characters, or the action, but through the energy of form, and the heat of historical imagination.

Like the romantic generation of 1820, Swinburne had fed his youthful eagerness on the highly stimulating example of the Elizabethans. No one except Lamb has done more to instil new

life into the forgotten reputations of Shakespeare's time. His critical work is copious, mixed, strong in spite of the monotony born of judgments ever intense, and of a sensibility impetuous to excess. He had clear and profound perceptions, in a field where to perceive at all was neither commonplace, nor without merit. His enthusiasms, though not his disparagements, contributed to settle literary values. He not only followed paths which had been already opened, and studied Ben Jonson and Chapman along with Shakespeare; he was one of the first to proclaim the genius of Blake; and recent writers, such as Landor, Charlotte Brontë, Dickens, met in him with that courageous and sincere judge who does not fear to pay homage to contemporary writers, as if they had undergone the test of time.

2. *The Novel of Adventure: Stevenson, etc.*—The revival of the novel of adventure springs at the same time from a reaction against the positive spirit of the century, and from the very impetus which carries the century towards an ever broader widening of the field of knowledge and experience. The age of steam and electricity sees the boundaries of the universe recede even farther, and the last riddles of the earth begin to open; the desire to know assumes something of the appetite for the marvellous. From the science of nature which daily grows more prodigal of wonders, the transition remains easy to the poetry of the supernatural. A new literature takes its rise in scientific imagination. On the other hand, in so far as the discipline of austere reason represses the need of dreams, and the persistent craving for a free exercise of fancy, the desire of the beyond in life and in art must overthrow a barrier in order to satisfy itself, or at least it believes that the barrier must be overthrown. So the direct or indirect expressions which for a generation it has been receiving from the idealistic renascence of religious faith, or of social charity, or of the love of the beautiful, no longer prove sufficient. It is now the whole intellectual temper of the period which is inwardly modified; the order and hierarchy of literary motives is upset; and some themes are now asserting themselves, after an unjustified eclipse, through a victory which is a sign of the times.

Realism in itself bears a character of severity and narrowness. It restricts our attention to a still vast, but circumscribed field; and what it excludes is precisely what remains most attractive to many minds. It focuses the artist's attention on subjects either

average and drab, or intense but painful; it implies the ruling passion of unmixed truth. Even when permeated by charity, it still clings to the soil of everyday mediocrity. Hardly has the documentary method of Trollope and Reade borne its characteristic fruits, when the tastes and preferences which cannot be reconciled with it make their hostility clear, and prepare for a counter-offensive. Stevenson is fully aware that his work is prompted by a desire to avoid the naturalism of Zola.

Realism, however, could enter into a friendly alliance with the search for the sensational. In the novels of Wilkie Collins and Reade it was combined with a propensity to rouse mysterious or frightful emotions; it would pass at will beyond the limits of the normal, and did not even stop at the bounds of the real.[1] In this way again, the new Romanticism continues the preceding age. But literary periods draw their main strength from the assurance or the illusion of the salutary change which they accomplish; and the period which, about the end of the century, succeeds a phase of predominant rationality, is conscious before everything of its opposition to it.

The need of adventure was already obeyed by such instincts as did not receive full satisfaction from the central will to balance and order that underlay the Victorian age. That need never dies, and least of all can the English genius cease to feel it. At no time had great explorers been more numerous. The personality of Burton[2] makes the link visible that connects the conquest of the far unknown with mysticism and imaginative literature. The success of the book in which Kinglake[3] describes the East with elegance and yet with genuine sincerity is due to the fascination of the subject, no less than to the talent of the author.

No figure is more original than that of Borrow.[4] His career developed through the very heart of the Victorian period, but morally he does not belong to it; his inner nature rather makes him a forerunner of the following generation. He has to the

[1] See above, Book VI, chap. v, sect. 3.

[2] Sir Richard Burton (1821-90): *A Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah*, 1855-56, etc.; translation of *The Arabian Nights*, 1885-88.

[3] A. W. Kinglake (1809-91): *Eothen*, 1844; *The Invasion of the Crimea*, 1863-87.

[4] George Borrow (1803-81). *The Zincali*, 1841, *The Bible in Spain*, 1843, *Lavengro*, 1851; *The Romany Rye*, 1857; *Wild Wales*, 1862; *Works* Norwich ed., 1924. See the biographies by H. Jenkins, 1912; C. K. Shorter (*Life of George Borrow*), 1920; study by E. Thomas (*George Borrow, the Man and His Works*), 1912, new ed., 1920.

highest degree the gift of possessing his spiritual independence without any outward rebellion. Whilst the social hierarchy is growing more imperious than ever, and respectability is stiffening into a dogma, Borrow achieves his freedom through the elusiveness of his roaming existence. His is the individual instinct, the initiative through which so many Englishmen redeem the psychological passiveness of their nation as a whole. His tastes lead him among the wanderers of the road—gipsies and tramps; he shares their life, learns their language, and finds occasion on the wayside for engrossing adventures in the most simple meetings and incidents. In Spain, where he is sent by an English association as missionary and distributor of Bibles, it is to the lower people that he turns; and his deep intuition of all that is human reveals to him the familiar intimate truth of a foreign soul. He travels in Wales, and no exotic land seems richer in enchanting experiences. His art is very conscious, and so does not always succeed in hiding itself; even when he is faithfully adhering to facts, his relation is too clever not to rouse the suspicion of literary insincerity. Whatever the case may be, such a genuine sense of the unexpected, of the fresh novelty contained in the nearest horizons as well as under distant skies, is a fecund source of creation. It wells up in a mind which carries with it everywhere an inexhaustible realisation of the interest and the variety of things. Strangeness here, as with Wordsworth and Coleridge, is not a property of beings in themselves, but a quality of the imagination in which they are reflected.

From about 1870, more numerous are the paths attempted by that restless desire of renovation. The historical novel, whose tradition had been kept alive by Thackeray, Dickens, Lord Lytton, George Eliot, Charles Reade, shows fresh vitality. Blackmore's [1] tales answer to the need of mental estrangement in time, and in space as well, for the surroundings in which their plots are set, the higher moors of Devonshire, appeal to imagination through their picturesque wildness. Just as *Lorna Doone* testifies to the attraction of the past, it points to the growing interest felt by the public in the picture of provincial manners, the study of which is thenceforth the matter of a whole series of books. Blackmore has invention, a poetical gift, a rather clever

[1] Richard Blackmore (1825-1900): *Lorna Doone*, 1869; *The Maid of Sker*, 1872, etc. See F. J. Snell, *The Blackmore Country*, 1906.

sense of effect; but neither his pathos nor his humour is free from conventional artifice. In the work of Shorthouse [1] history lends an elaborate background, of patient solidity, to the serious working of a pious and sincere idealism. *John Inglesant*, which was extolled in its day, meets to-day with unjust scorn. This picture of religious life in England during the middle part of the seventeenth century is drawn in accordance with the instincts of properly Victorian æsthetics; the art of Shorthouse is not without some analogy to that of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, and his mystic hero has the somewhat morbid spirituality of one of Burne-Jones's knights. However, the soft light which falls on that novel as from a painted glass window blends gem-like hues into a harmonious tone, and the atmosphere of strangeness in which it is bathed is subtle enough to remind one of Hawthorne's manner.

Another symptom of the uneasiness which is then rising from the depths of Victorian consciousness is the attraction which it feels thenceforth towards the varieties of culture most opposed to that industrial civilisation, the very type of which Great Britain seems then to be. An age of positive reason, stirred by so many secret fevers, becomes enamoured of the refined or fatalistic simplicity in which the Far East has for thousands of years found repose. On the very eve of Japan's transformation, Lafcadio Hearn [2] passionately discovers the heroic soul, the exquisite chivalry hidden within the tradition of her smiling courtesy. He himself has brought from the West the last gospel of scientific intellectualism, the philosophy of Spencer; he believes his allegiance keeps faithful to the sovereign principle of evolution, whilst his moral being is allured, captivated by the charm of a land and a race whose physical and mental horizons are essentially unchanged. An artist and psychologist, a delicate stylist, he eagerly drinks in the philtre which satiates the unconscious thirst of his profounder nature. His books are a revelation; and the Anglo-Saxon world, secure in the proud possession of the rules

[1] Joseph Henry Shorthouse (1834-1903). *John Inglesant*, 1881; *Sir Percival*, 1886. See *Life and Letters*, 1905.

[2] Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), born in the Ionian Islands, of Irish and Greek parents, stayed in the United States and the West Indies, became Professor of English Literature in the University of Tokio, married in Japan and definitely settled there. *Two Years in the French West Indies*, 1890; *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*, 1894; *Kokoro*, 1896; *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields*, 1897; *Japan: an Attempt at Interpretation*, 1904, etc. See the biography by E. Bisland (*Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn*), 1906; studies by G. M. Gould, 1908; J. de Smet, 1911; E. L. Tinker (*Lafcadio Hearn's American Days*), 1925.

of life which have so far sustained its strength, learns in them how to respect an ethics, a religion, an art, based on an entirely independent foundation.

Through elementary methods, and without estranging himself from English skies, Richard Jefferies [1] practises the same escape of the soul. In him the mysticism of nature revives, with an intensity which half a century of increasing consciousness has but stimulated the more; and he surrenders to it more thoroughly than Wordsworth did. Less influenced by university learning, though no less by science itself and books, and closer even to the daily experience of what he describes, he more widely introduces into literature that wealth derived from the direct observation of fields and animals, which has won recognition there from the time of Gilbert White. The descriptions of Jefferies are of a minuteness which may well seem excessive, whenever one refuses to share in the faith which animates them: the ardour of an impassioned naturalism. His art, of superior worth in its accuracy, its sense of animal or vegetable life, its poetical freshness of perception, lacks balance, does not know how to select and construct. The reflection and the taste are not here worthy of the vision. On the other hand, his original intuition is in absolute control of his sensibility, because his culture, being entirely self-made, does not oppose to it any negative social complex; the pantheism of Jefferies is not merely the twilight of an ecstasy felt in childhood; it is a complete, lived religion, free from the alloy of an alien spiritualism; and his confession (*The Story of My Heart*), with its ineffectual, moving, stammering utterance, is a psychological document of rare value.

Stevenson [2] is a born writer. He imparts a high artistic quality to the novel of adventure, in its most declared form.

[1] Richard Jefferies (1848-87): *The Gamekeeper at Home*, 1878; *Wild Life in a Southern County*, 1879; *The Amateur Poacher*, 1879; *Wood Magic*, 1881; *Bevis*, 1882; *The Story of My Heart*, 1883; *The Life of the Fields*, 1884; *After London*, 1885, etc. See the biography of P. E. Thomas, 1909; studies by C. J. Masseck (*Richard Jefferies, Étude d'une Personnalité*), 1913; A. E. Thorn, 1914; F. Wallis (*The Ideals of Richard Jefferies*), 1914.

[2] Robert Louis Stevenson, born in 1850 in Edinburgh, was the son of an engineer, studied at the University, and sought a literary career; after writing various essays, he sojourned in France and published original impressions: *An Inland Voyage*, 1878; *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*, 1879. He went to California, married an American lady, Mrs. Osbourne (1879); collected his moral essays and literary criticisms: *Virginibus Puerisque*, 1881; *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*, 1882; and short stories: *New Arabian Nights*, 1882; while *The Silverado Squatters*, 1883, describes western America. The great success of his adventure novel, *Treasure Island*, 1883, decided his calling. He published *Prince Otto*, 1885; *The Dynamiter*, 1885; *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, 1886; *Kidnapped*, 1886; *The Black*

In so doing, he deliberately returns to the primitive, fresh powers of literary creation. A refined nature, gifted with a keen perception of beauty, susceptible to the delicate shades of ideas or words, he is retained by a temperament which at bottom is almost Puritanic within the range of the inner sensualities of the soul. He observes, enjoys and assimilates concrete reality—manners, physical features and moral characteristics, outlines and colours of landscapes; the circumambient realism is felt in the wealth and the precision of his picturesque notations. However, a preoccupation with conduct, and the self-absorption of a meditative thought, remain the outstanding traits of his nature. This ethical attention to life fosters and accentuates the repugnance of his instinct against the ambitions and methods of science. He wants, once more, to infuse into the things of the mind the limpid and fecund sap which rises from elementary experience, and from the psychology of the child. Without any explicit profession, Stevenson gives his adhesion to anti-intellectualism, the need of which he experiences, like many others about him. His novels, his poems, his critical studies or essays, have their unity there. The first minister to wonder and the passion for dramatic adventure; the second subtly enter into the unsophisticated emotions of the young; the third analyse authors, their writings, or the wisdom which we learn from reflection, with a simplicity which goes straight to direct data, to those which the intelligence will readily neglect or despise. In this sense, he always wrote *virginibus puerisque;* and his artistic aim was to reconcile the scrupulous refinement of maturity with the youthful purity of the theme.

With that charming and almost feminine nature, Stevenson is on his guard against softness or mawkishness; he has a sense of courage and virility; he wins over disease and death, by means of

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Arrow, 1888; *The Master of Ballantrae*, 1889; *The Wrong Box*, 1889; *The Wrecker*, 1892; *Catriona*, 1893; *The Ebb Tide*, 1894. Extremely delicate in health, he set out on a long sea voyage in the Pacific, after which he settled in the island of Samoa (1891), drawing from these experiences the material for *The Island* [illegible] 1893; *The Vailima Letters*, 1895. He died in 1894, leaving [illegible]

Works, Tusitala ed., 1923, etc. [illegible] new ed., 1915); R. Masson, 1924, J. A. Steuart, *R. L. Stevenson* (*Man and Writer*, etc.), 1924; G. K. Chesterton, 1927; the *Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed by Sidney Colvin, 1899; the studies by Baildon, 1901; Japp, 1905; Swinnerton (*Robert Louis Stevenson, a Critical Study*), 1914; Sir W. Raleigh, 1915; Sir L. Stephen (*Studies of a Biographer*, vol. iv.), 1902; G. S. Hellman (*The True Stevenson, a Study in Clarification*), 1925.

an unceasing struggle, sixteen years of the most conscientious literary labour. In an age when writers do not dislike standing in the limelight, one cannot say that Stevenson displays his own self with coquetry; he allows his personality to appear only with modesty; far from exploiting the pathos of his life, he is at pains to hide it. The sweetness and the heroism of his nature are equally sincere. In him the strong fibre of the Scottish temperament keeps recognisable, under the grace of a sensibility and a culture with which were mingled the fine artistic perception of France, and later on the voluptuous influences of the Pacific. France stands for a large share in the formation of his talent. The clear, exact, nervous and smooth style, which from an early stage he selected for himself, bears the stamp of our best masters. He breathed the air of France at a moment when the triumph of Naturalism was past its prime, and the symbolist revival was already dawning. The vigorous but exterior effects of the former school repelled him; with the promise of the latter, on the contrary, he may have felt his own affinity. The French character, in any case, revealed to him such of its inner secrets as could be made out from the talk of our Cevennes peasants, rather than from more conventional encounters.

The anecdotes and the sketches of *An Inland Voyage*, *Travels with a Donkey*, are narrated or drawn with an already unerring tact, a delightful sobriety, to which Scottish humour and French measure have contributed. *Treasure Island* was a delight to several generations of young readers on more than one continent, and grown-ups will dip into it again; the craft of the story-teller, the intensity of the episodes, the vividness of the exotic scenes and of the main characters, are merits in themselves; but they grow out of a more profound intuition—that of the imaginative appeal, of the dramatic progress, and the moral originality of the themes; and this is an intuition of a psychological order. The sinister cripple, Silver, is worthy of a great artist, and Stevenson owed the first outline of this figure to his rambles, in early youth, through the underworld of beggary and vice. The Scottish novels are very different from those of Sir Walter Scott; much more modern as they are and technically conscious, much more sparing in their method, they do not show the prodigious abundance, the careless creation of unforgettable characters, which remain the birthright of the master; still, in many respects, they

bear being compared with them. Stevenson, like Scott, was steeped in the intimate knowledge of the manners and the people of Scotland; his landscapes, more intense, reap the benefit of the gradual inurement through which, in the course of the century, the wild and grand aspects of nature had been divested of the last remnants of their repulsive horror, and had become the familiar companions of the human mind. The structure of those novels, or their liveliness, is not everywhere equal, and does not hide the weaker moments of an undermined vitality. The last, *Weir of Hermiston*, which was left unfinished, is by far the most concentrated, and promised to be a masterpiece.

In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* we find Stevenson attracted, as one could have expected, by the problems of the subconscious. At bottom, it is an allegory in the manner of Bunyan; but modern psychology here broadens and renews the old ethics of Puritanism; and contemporary Symbolism imparts to allegory a freedom of movement that is infinitely precious. The case of a dual personality is not studied with superior subtlety; but it is brought home to our imaginations with striking efficiency. This book would reach an exceptional order of artistic value, were it not that its method is not kept with sufficient energy within the field of the implicit.

All that Stevenson wrote about the South Sea Islands, the refuge of his last years, is the work of a man gifted with a keen sensibility to landscape, and with a penetrating sense of primitive, child-like souls; broad-minded enough to accept the paganism of nature, and reconcile it with a spirituality freed from all dogmas. The essay-writer has a winning and yet shrewd manner, in which a smiling irony mingles with the clear-sightedness of disillusioned eyes. In their essential subjectivity, these essays bear some distant resemblance to those of Charles Lamb; less artistically wrought, less richly loaded with intentions, they make, as Elia had done, the writer's personality the very centre of his work. As a poet, Stevenson shows a simple felicity of phrase, a sensitiveness of soul, which constitute in themselves a sufficient inspiration, within an intimate and modest order of themes.

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Stevenson devoted very attentive care to the art of writing. He knew the anxious quest of the exact word, the search for a cadence at the same time harmonious and not too markedly

regular. His style is sufficiently nervous to bear such conscious filing and refining. It draws its strength from a very varied and supple vocabulary, in which the whole scale of learned shades meets with the most racy vein—popular, technical or dialectal words. At times the exquisiteness of the form seems to exceed the just demands of the matter, and this is the single weakness of that prose. Therefore, the very dense sparingness of its best moments—in *Weir of Hermiston*, for example—raises it to its perfection. It then keeps as it were a classical quality in its eager but balanced Romanticism.

3. *Æsthetes and Decadents.*—The worship of beauty, with Ruskin, had been a religion. It had fitted in easily with the demands of the moral and social ideals with which the Victorian age never ceased to be deeply instinct. It had tended to health and balance. Already in the Pre-Raphaelites, in spite of the pious and mediæval tone, which their imaginations assumed, a very different attitude was adumbrated; they made room for sensuousness by the side of enthusiasm. Swinburne, who felt their influence, glorified the beautiful with a reckless and blasphemous ardour, which seemed to adore it out of enmity to the useful gods. Through him, and through other channels as well, the French doctrine of art for art's sake was creeping into England; Naturalism indeed, at one point, coincided with that principle, and like it placed the artist's activity outside of and above morals.

It is to such symptoms, and not to the gospel of Ruskin, that one must trace back the independent development of English literary Æstheticism.

The master of this movement is Walter Pater.[1] In his scholarly retirement, the prophet of an esoteric faith, he teaches it with an intellectual and detached zeal. It radiates out through more or less direct applications, studies of civilisations and souls;

[1] Walter Pater (1839-94), fellow of Brasenose College, led at Oxford the life of a lay recluse, and through the magnetism of his work influenced a group of disciples, before exercising a much wider action in England. He published historical and critical studies: *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, 1873 (the Conclusion, omitted in the second and third editions, reappeared in the fourth, 1888); *Imaginary Portraits*, 1887; *Appreciations*, 1889; *Plato and Platonism*, 1893; *Greek Studies*, 1895; *Miscellaneous Studies*, 1895; and novels: *Marius the Epicurean*, 1885; *Gaston de Latour* (unfinished), 1896. *Works*, Library ed., 1910. See the biography by T. Wright, 1907; studies by A. Symons (*Studies in Prose and Verse*), 1904; A. C. Benson (English Men of Letters), 1906; E. Thomas (*Walter Pater, a Critical Study*), 1913; E. Bendz (*The Influence of Pater . . . in the Prose Writings of Oscar Wilde*), 1914.

on one occasion only it reveals itself unreservedly, and then, as if frightened at its own audacity, hides itself again. In this text where it is concentrated (the Conclusion to the *Renaissance*) its opposition to Ruskin's message is vividly brought out. The adept's duty is no longer to pursue through the efflorescence of *natural forms the Divine influx, the source of strength and of* harmony with the will of the universe; beauty no longer is the blissful perfection of creatures true to the law of their essence; it no longer rests like a glory, in the societies of men, upon the summits of simple austerity and of heroism. Every social or *moral consideration vanishes; one thing remains: the voluptuous* asceticism of the sage who is to die. Life offers, to the knowing, occasions of psychical intensity; to gather as many of them as possible, and to taste them all at their highest pitch, so that the flame of consciousness should burn with its full ardour, such is the secret principle of an existence that actually possesses and rules itself. Far from giving itself away, it shall suck in the whole world, and absorb it for its own good; this devouring strain will wear it out in its turn; but death is the inevitable night, whose coming is delayed, but not prevented, by the mean thrift of thankless virtues; and nothing matters but the violence of the fire in which an ephemeral energy is irradiated by its very destruction.

This consistent hedonism does not stop short of its ultimate stage; it shakes off all the chains with which society and the hygiene of souls have loaded the skilful search for pleasure; unmindful of the collectivity, it makes for the death of the individual along a path blossoming with roses and strewn with ashes. It is indistinguishable from the restrained and penetrating pessimism which FitzGerald had enclosed in three hundred immortal lines.[1] More ascetic outwardly, it lingers less on the smiling aspects of epicureanism; *it is urged by a more anxious* impatience for life; it widens, too, the field of voluptuousness, introduces abundantly into it the emotions of knowledge. But it teaches no other wisdom; its aroma no less surely benumbs all the illusions or the beliefs which connect the life of one being with *something beyond itself.*

Pater did not always write, or think either, it seems, at that pitch. On other occasions, his doctrine dwells on the contempla-

[1] See above, Book V. chap iv. sect. 6.

tion, the analysis of beautiful forms; or even he brings into it an element which alters and amends it. *Marius the Epicurean,* the novel in which most of his philosophy, though not of his art, is to be found, seems to spiritualise the search for pleasure as far as sacrifice pure and simple.

Such an extension of the principle no doubt implies that hedonism is diversified with new shades; that into it is admitted a superior quality, which ordinary perception is no longer by itself competent to appreciate. A strange and secretive mind, Pater never explained away a touch of mystery in his life; and his adhesion to the essence of a very free form of Christianity seems to have been more than merely a matter of observance.

Thus diverted from the direct and uncompromising assertion of self, his æstheticism was spent in tasting and intensifying the joys to be reaped from the knowledge of the past and the understanding of human souls; and in order to heighten these joys, his method was to quicken in himself and others the full consciousness of all their aspects. Pater was curiously interested in the phases of history; and chiefly in those, like the Renascence and the beginnings of Christianity, in which men's minds were driven by a powerful eagerness, or stirred by profound conflicts, which roused impassioned tumults in them. The main object of his interest is still man, even when he follows him through the picturesque surroundings where his life develops; and the measure of the artistic value of individuals is still the complexity of their character. This implies that the historian or the moralist, with him, tends to be merged in the psychologist; and the psychologist works for the benefit of the critic.

Pater as a critic is eminent. His method is that impressionism which Hazlitt and Lamb had brilliantly illustrated. His intuition, no less acute, is still more personal than theirs, in so far as it is more limited, exclusively governed by the feeling of his own powers; in so far, too, as it readily utilises semi-conscious states, the dim regions of the inner world, and as his judgments more often are a divination of the obscure parts and of the reverse side of souls. Penetration, at that degree, has a touch of the morbid; many will deem it disquieting, it is made up of too composite a sympathy. Whatever the case may be, the "appreciations" of Pater are re-creations, the substance of which is, we feel, drawn from himself. This subjective attitude is accentuated in the

Imaginary Portraits, which borrow nothing from reality but germs, suggestions or types, and which through their central method are more than half-way approximations to the novel. Pater's critical studies do not aim at completeness, nor at a cautious and unexceptionable accuracy; they seize upon moral, and thus usually subtle and hidden, elements of the individualities of writers or artists, and connect with these elements the particular modes and special accents of their art. These studies are far from accounting for everything; they do not leave the reader's mind fully satisfied, and do not always carry conviction. But few are the cases in which they do not strike us as a sort of second sight, deciphering, through a transparent medium, the subconscious impulses at the root of expressions and forms. One might point to famous pages—such as the analysis of the Gioconda's smile—which can hardly have been written but under the sway of an illumination that is almost a mystic state.

In Pater's theoretical studies of literature, it is to the same faculty that his power can be traced. The admirable *Essay on Style* describes the anxious search for the accurate word with exceptional felicity, after the example and practice of Flaubert, and dissolves all the rules which go to the making of a writer's conscientiousness into the single respect of an inward truth. Here again, the technique of writing, lighted up by the radiance from a divining intelligence, discloses its deepest secret, and it is a spiritual one.

An intuitive critic, Pater has in him the soul of poetry. He is aware of it; and just as he brushes aside the superficial barrier which a mere prejudice would erect between prose and poetical effects, he clothes his judgments in the richly significant garb of the most harmonious and many-hued language. As a writer he is of the first rank, but fails to be one of the greatest, because his creative strength is impoverished through an excess of refinement, and he lacks the constructive sense of a work as a whole His crowning merit lies in details; in the perfection of single pages, occasionally of chapters or essays, the polished quality of which covers, without hiding it, a robust concatenation of ideas. This style is enriched by the powers of Romanticism; it is flexibly modelled on the delicacies of a keen sensitive perception, and shines with all the colours of a vivid imagination: it reaches at times, in the rendering of "impressions," a degree of acuteness,

and of evocative witchcraft, which distinctly betokens a more modern, more conscious art, capable of more intense effects, than that of his predecessors, whether one thinks of Landor, De Quincey, or Ruskin. Pater's mastery resides in the sureness of the method with which this broader scale of artistic devices is handled. His prose is a skilful music, nervous like that of recent composers, blending the more distant elements of nature and the soul into a harmony founded upon dissonance; subtle, and yet as clear as classical chords.

Oscar Wilde [1] is the leader of the æsthetic school in the eyes of the average reader. A disciple of Pater, he pushes his master's academic and sober doctrine to an excessive and cynical display. As a young man, he made a name for himself through the intense and refined audacity of his clothes, his tastes, his language; his gifts of satirical wit and epigram thus lent his talent a drawing-room and rather superficial character. However, the sharpness of his delineations, and his biting verve, already revealed a born writer of superior merit.

He tried his hand at several kinds of writing, without yet achieving that deeper agreement of sincerity with brilliance which shows the main strength and stable quality of a mind. His poems are elegant, charming, but do not disclose any original personality; in their sauciness, or their pathos, they strike us as unequally successful experiments in verse. His first articles or essays bear too obvious marks of his inordinate desire for paradox.

With *Intentions*, however, the serious bearing of what might have seemed a mere affectation grows manifest. In all directions, the criticism and the analysis here are singularly far-reaching.

[1] Oscar Fingall O'Flahertie Wilde, born in Ireland in 1856, studied at Oxford, where he imbibed the influence of Ruskin and Pater, travelled in Italy and Greece, posed as a leader of the younger æsthetes, and published verses: *Poems*, 1881; critical studies: *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, etc., many of which were collected in 1891 (*Intentions*); comedies or dramas: *The Duchess of Padua*, 1891; *Lady Windermere's Fan*, 1893; *Salome* (first written in French, and performed in Paris in 1894); *A Woman of No Importance*, 1894; *An Ideal Husband, The Importance of Being Earnest*, 1895; novels: *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, 1887; *The Happy Prince*, etc., 1888; *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1891; *The House of Pomegranates*, 1891. Charged with a breach of morality (1895), he spent two years in penal servitude; 1898 saw the publication of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, and in 1900 he died in France. *De Profundis*, written in imprisonment, 1896, appeared in 1905. *Dorian Gray* is no longer published in England. *Poems*, two vols., 1906; *Works*, twelve vols. (incomplete). See the bibliography by St. Mason, 1914; studies by A. Symons (*Studies in Prose and Verse*), 1904; A. Gide, 1905; R. T. Hopkins, 1913; A. Ransome (*Oscar Wilde, a Critical Study*), 1913; Fr. Harris, 1920; L. F. Choisy, 1927.

Wilde's dilettantism is transformed into a theory of the self-sufficient and autonomous value of art; his mockery, into a scrutiny of the blind side of conscious beings; his irreverence, into a sketch of an "immoralist" doctrine in the manner of Nietzsche. The title of the collection is no unsafe clue to the hesitation and incompleteness which are still felt in those diverse attempts; the destructive thrusts of the thought do not converge against one object, so as to multiply their deadliness by repetition; the implied suggestions do not develop into theses. Nothing, on the other hand, can be more intelligent.

Wilde's plays are remarkably successful, and stand out through their exceptional merit on the almost unrelieved mediocrity of theatrical production for a whole century. His comedies have a rapid and brilliant animation; their dialogue shows the easy flow of the traditional French manner; the plots are cleverly wrought; the comic characters, mere sketches most of them, lay no claim to depth. The displays of wit and verbal fencing, which go beyond life, and at times overreach themselves in a sort of enthusiasm, would remind one of Congreve, were it not that an undercurrent of bitter self-consciousness is felt behind the mirth of their fanciful irony. This contrasted character imparts to these light works their chief interest, and their weakness as well. To all appearances, their aim is only to amuse, and so laughter or a smile should do full justice to their meaning; but the laugh which they raise does not ring true; it leaves a corroding taste in the mouth; it opens the way for a bold criticism of the moral and social order, which is just adumbrated, and never finds an opportunity to develop—an opportunity which the author, indeed, seems unwilling to create. In the same way, some personages are meant to be edifying: for instance, in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, the goodness of the beings who live according to the truth of instinct is set in a favourable light, as opposed to the withering artificiality of conventional virtues. The antithesis, as it is presented, is hardly able to carry conviction. Those comedies, in spite of their brilliance, belong to a mongrel and somewhat unnatural kind. Wilde had it in him to write problem plays, with a frankly destructi[illegible] [illegible]nted with the resistance and the [illegible] his themes, thinned out the [illegible] plots so as to please the [illegible] in which the cruelty of

sensual passion is studied in a realistic manner, has more unity, though its art might be more delicately shaded.

The book in which Wilde has expressed himself unreservedly is his novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. His æstheticism is to be found there with all its aspects: the search for intense or rare sensations, the ban put on every belief, every feeling, which sets a limit to the faculty of enjoyment, or enthralls the soul; the superiority of the true artist—of him whose whole life is a work of art—over the rules of society or morality. There again is to be found the nearest approach to a convincing psychological study of which Wilde was capable: the complete analysis of his own dilettantism in the two characters of Lord Henry and Dorian Gray. There as well he has, with the passive clear-sightedness which belongs to some mental states, given to his own thesis its antidote, by depicting the inner ruin brought about by the stubborn quest of pleasure. The novel is built upon a striking symbol: the divided personality implied in a detached existence, which watches itself as one might a play, and from which the strokes of life glance off powerlessly, is represented by a mysterious inversion of the natural order, through which the actual face keeps its inviolate youth, while the portrait is stained by the defiling course of impure years; until the day when the point of a dagger, shearing through the fiction on which this division rests, gives back to art its impassible serenity, and to the living being his mortal transience. Filled as it is with the influences of French decadentism, the book is strongly conceived, and written in a very studied style; it is, moreover, whether willingly or unwillingly, as sincere as it was in Wilde to be.

In spite of its clear-sightedness, however, and of the implied self-criticism which it abundantly reveals, it leaves a turbid and unhealthy impression upon the mind. A fate in it casts its shadow before, and nothing seems able to check its threatening course. A few years later the crisis broke out in which society crushed the man who had long set it at defiance. Wilde found in the realities of his misery the inspiration of the most powerful lines and of the only moving words which he ever wrote (*Ballad of Reading Gaol*). *De Profundis*, the effusion in which his ulcerated heart pours forth bitterness, pride and self-pity, rather than remorse and humility, is a strange work, which strikes the reader without touching him; the intuition of what purification by

pain can be is present and alive in these pages; but it only throws light on the secret joy of the artist, who in renunciation discovers a new means of intense self-expression.

Wilde's work lives as one of the most penetrating analyses of the compromises in which the Victorian age had indulged; but by incurring moral discredit, he has destroyed the authority of his criticism. His thought, while it is quite as acute as that of Samuel Butler, and is clothed in much more attractive language, lacks the latter's solidity and balance.[1]

The English "decadents" are not a clearly outlined group. The "fin de siècle" spirit is diffused in the very atmosphere of this period. Pessimism, intellectual anarchy, all the painfulness which may cling to naturalism, all the boldness or perversity of symbolism and æstheticism, converge to support the confessed and indeed complacent feeling of a decadence. After so many positive achievements, man as a creature of desire no longer deems it possible to add a new zest to his efforts, but by giving up all thought of further progress; he accepts as a law the gradual dissolution of his energy. The France of Verlaine and Rimbaud then furnishes this frame of mind with models and formulæ. The greater number of the younger English novelists and poets of that age are steeped, to various degrees, in this very mood. The austere meditation of a Hardy, among the more mature writers, is not untouched by it (*Jude the Obscure*).

The only unity that can be found in the movement is of a psychological order. It is the outbreak of the instincts which had been repressed by the constraint of the Victorian period. The social and moral discipline of an age which had been stirred by many ferments, but had remained unanimous in its exterior observance, this time is shaken to its inner faith; the rebellious ideas and feelings escape from its hold in every direction. The individual asserts himself unrestrainedly. The need of frank or cynical truth, just like that of ethereal or morbid fancy; the paradoxes of aggressive personality, and at the same time the extolling of foreign examples; an uncompromising intellectuality, and on the other hand every caprice of imagination, the senses or the heart—all are equally the outcome of a central revolt, in

[1] Among the theorists of æstheticism may be included John Addington Symonds (1840-93), art historian and critic. *The Renaissance in Italy*, 1875-86; *Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama*, 1884; *Essays Speculative and Suggestive*, 1890, etc. See the study by V. W. Brooks, 1915.

which an orthodoxy of conduct, thought and taste, enforced by the dictatorial power of opinion, is now openly held in check.

The years that follow 1890 are those when the weakening of an out-of-date dogmatism, and the fatigue of an aging culture, are most widely reflected in the tone of souls. Then it is that some artists and writers, whom their affinities draw together, give a rally-point to those scattered tendencies. The strange inventions, the sophisticated audacity or the raw realism of the *Yellow Book*[1] bring the decadent school to a head. Almost all the advanced writers gather round this periodical. To its name the "nineties" owe the yellowish hue which they have kept as an attribute in a popular phrase.

Being thus vague and diffused, English decadentism has no literary programme. In it the most various literary intentions are found side by side. Æsthetes such as Wilde, naturalists like George Moore,[2] realists like Crackanthorpe,[3] neo-Catholics like Lionel Johnson,[4] idealists and "Celtic" revivalists like Yeats,[5] are thus brought together. The most illuminating student[6] of this group, making an attempt to define its common spirit, points out its connection with continental, and especially with French origins; and it is in Symbolism—a more precise artistic endeavour, with a different aim—that he thinks he discovers its focus.

Little consistent as it is, decadentism at least contains the germs of many further growths. It is a confused tentative medley of the tendencies which will renovate the literature of the twentieth century. Its course was, of necessity, to be brief. It meets in England with a prompter and more unanimous resistance than in France, as the English determination to preserve a healthy state of the public mind, on utilitarian grounds, is more inflexible. As early as 1895, a reaction sets in against it; this reaction triumphs from about 1900, thanks to the tightening of the nation's

[1] 1894-97. The drawings of Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98) remain typical of this collection.

[2] See further, sect. 4.

[3] 1865-96; a disciple of Zola and Maupassant.

[4] See further, sect. 4.

[5] Idem.

[6] Arthur Symons, born in 1865, poet, critic and novelist, was deeply influenced by contemporary French literature. He edited the *Savoy*, a review of art and letters, emphatically modern in its tastes (1896). Mention may be made of the following among his poetical collections, where the influence of Baudelaire and of the French symbolists is very apparent: *London Nights*, 1895; *Images of Good and Evil*, 1899; among his critical studies: *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, 1899; *Studies in Prose and Verse*, 1904, etc.

will at the time of the South African war. Among the writers whom the spell of the movement had attracted for a while, the larger number break away from it, and develop towards some more definite artistic purpose. But not a few, as if the weariness of living had eaten into their very vitality die, before they have been able to bring the promise of their personalities to full realisation. The despair, the nihilism, the idle revolt of this short-lived generation, thus constitute, as it were, a replica, but an intensified one, of the Romanticism of 1820. The premature end of an Aubrey Beardsley, an Ernest Dowson,[1] a Crackanthorpe, and the suicide of a John Davidson,[2] too well agree with the bitterness and fever of their inspiration, not to confirm its sincerity, and not to throw light upon it.[3]

4. *The Celtic Revival.*—Inner affinities of more than one kind connect the new Romanticism with the Celtic revival. Ireland is the centre of the latter movement; and its leaders in Ireland have been, on the whole, writers instinct with a lyrical and mystic idealism. They share, moreover, through the origins of their art, in all the tendencies of which the composite spirit of the declining century is made up; Symbolism, Naturalism, Æstheticism, and even decadent influences, contribute to their development. But the outstanding point is that the first seed from which the Celtic renascence grew was sown by European Romanticism from 1790 to 1848. This powerful stimulation of consciousness, and of the deeper collective instincts, brought about a general revival of the feelings of nationality or race. The nineteenth century is seething with the ferment of political decomposition and reorganisation, which has been inoculated into the system of the old world by the active force of blood or soul kinship, between human groups which the chances of history had drawn apart. Thus stimulated, national feeling has since dominated over the psychology of peoples, and still does so at the present day. As soon, therefore, as the Neo-Romanticism of 1880, after a quieter period, again revives the grievances of

[1] 1867-1900. *Verses*, 1896.

[2] 1857-1909. Of a vigorous but embittered poetic talent, a strong pessimist. *Fleet Street Eclogues*, 1893-96; *Ballads and Songs*, 1894; *New Ballads*, 1897; *Last Ballads*, 1899; *The Testament of John Davidson*, 1908, etc. See H. Williams, *Modern English Writers*, 1920.

[3] Max Beerbohm, born in 1872, a caricaturist and essayist, is the most notable survivor of this group. *The Works of Max Beerbohm*, 1896; *Yet Again*, 1909, *Seven Men*, 1919, etc.

repressed nationalities, it naturally fosters the act of spiritual will through which the "Celtic" groups of Great Britain put forth the claims of their distinct originality, by the side of English culture, or against it.

What is thus awaking and asserting itself, is rather a temperament, than the figure of a genuine ethnical unit. Scotland, Ireland, and even Wales, though to a lesser degree, are the complex products of the mingling of several races. The Celtic spirit is an abstraction; it stands for an ideal, the full portrait towards which those features tend which in the long run will shape themselves out, from what a human group is, and chiefly from what it wants to be. In the present instance, the human group is not only mixed, it is scattered. Nothing can be more certain than the fecundity of the Celtic infusion in the literature and life of Great Britain; nothing, on the other hand, can be more hazardous than the theories which profess to gauge and value the contribution of Celticism in the total product. Many of the qualities which are most readily attributed to it have doubtlessly existed, to a pronounced degree, in manifest Anglo-Saxons. Whatever the case may be, there is an Irish psychological personality; it is not without some resemblance to the indigenous aspects of the Welsh originality; and in the Highland Scots analogous characteristics have been pointed out. The linguistic kinship of the dialects emphasises this vague family consciousness, and supplies it, indeed, with its most substantial element, in spite of the century-old retreat of the Celtic languages, in Great Britain, before the advance of English. Outside the national frontiers, the Bretons of French Brittany are admitted to a place in the ideal unity which tends to revive; and even France, on account of her "Gaulish" descent, is considered by some as part of it.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the writers of Irish birth are merged without any resistance in the current of English literature; the attraction of a more widespread language and a more developed culture rather easily destroys with them the consciousness of their separate nationality. Even those upon whom the stamp of their origin remains most clearly printed—such as Sheridan or Goldsmith—soften down these features, and adapt them to the taste of their English readers. In Scotland, where the flame of intellectual zeal never ceased to burn bright, the spirit of a distinct nationhood among men of

letters keeps stronger; Smollett in London does not forget his smaller fatherland; from Allan Ramsay to Burns, the poets of the soil react against the literary centralisation then in the making. Burns writes his masterpieces in dialect; Scott quickens the knowledge and love of the national past; the feeling of history is stimulated by Romanticism; and already from that time the revival of all the elements of artistic individuality lying in the kingdoms, the provinces and districts which go to make up the impersonal unity of Great Britain, is being gradually prepared. The political movement aiming at general self-government and federal organisation, of which the grant of autonomy to Ireland is the last stage, is later than that rebirth of the feeling of a separate identity, and is derived from it.

The renascence of "Celticism" in English literature coincides with the acuter stage of the "home rule" agitation, without being identified with it. By far the greater number of the persons who take an active share in the Celtic movement are Irish patriots; but every shade of political feeling is represented among them, from the most fiery advocacy of independence to a Platonic sympathy with this cause. In so far as they belong to English literature, that is to say, use English as their means of expression, they find themselves outside the very conditions of a complete spiritual enfranchisement, as imagined or demanded by the out-and-out apostles of Irish political freedom. The latter find only doubtful or suspicious support in the works of a Yeats and a Synge.

The sufferings of Ireland, and her ethnic quality (leaving out Ulster) more homogeneous than that of Scotland, make her the historical centre of those various claims. Along with the memories left by Macpherson's Ossian, it is the Irish character which gives its main features to the popular image of the "Celtic soul," as it appears about the middle of the nineteenth century. The Anglo-Saxon having conquered the world of matter, the Celt demands as his due the kingdom of mind. The measure of dreamy imaginativeness to be found in his old legends, by the side of the most bloody episodes; the inclination to the sad poetry of the heart, and to the fanciful wanderings of the will, which his traditional temperament has preserved, amid flashes of clear-sightedness and moods of matter-of-fact realism—both promote a partly illusory synthesis, according to which the Celtic mind is all

made up of melancholy emotion and mysticism. The disquisitions of Matthew Arnold, like those of Renan in France, are at the very root of this simplified notion. Thus, when the "Celtic revival" becomes an actual movement of thought and letters, it takes its stand on psychological data, supposedly established and sure. In so doing, it chooses a place for itself on the inmost plane of the new Romanticism. With the æsthetes and the decadents, a keen intellectuality dominated over the impulses of passion or the senses; pathos itself assumed an artificial look; emotions of the head rather than of the heart adapted themselves readily to a scrupulous elaboration of form, and to the lessons of French technique. On the contrary, with the Celtic revivalists, intelligence once more submits to the free play of a poetical and dreamy imagination.

This is a gradually reached ideal, evolved out of deliberate thinking; there enters into it the now revived self-consciousness of a people and a race. The first writers who lent a voice of her own to modern Ireland cherished a less intense perception of her moral originality. Among novelists, a Carleton,[1] a Lover,[2] a Lever,[3] as well as a Miss Edgeworth, plead for a neglected personality, translate it into another language, interpret it, rather than they express it. Poets, on the other hand, following the lead of Thomas Moore, succeed less imperfectly in catching that subtle essence, the soul of a nation. Such singers as Mangan[4] and Allingham[5] are better attuned to the note which the emancipated sons of a free Ireland nowadays require.

It was between 1885 and 1895 that the movement began as an active and organised crusade. From London, where the first groups were formed, it spread to Dublin. Its leaders—Gavan Duffy, Douglas Hyde, Stopford Brooke—formulated a programme. The culture of Ireland was to be founded on a systematic endeavour to realise intellectual freedom. It was to renew its vigour by being refreshed from the fountain-heads of its originality: Ireland's old texts, legends, tales, poems, which, once translated, were to be developed, so as to supply the inven-

[1] William Carleton (1794-1869): *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, 1830-33, etc.
[2] Samuel Lover (1797-1868): *Rory O'More*, 1837; *Handy Andy*, 1842, etc.
[3] Charles Lever (1806-72): *Harry Lorrequer*, 1839; *Charles O'Malley*, 1841, etc.
[4] J. C. Mangan (1803-49).
[5] William Allingham (1824-89): *Poems*, 1850.

tion of writers with themes, and their imagination with visions. Meanwhile a mean was being found between English, a foreign tongue, and Gaelic, the national language, which was lifeless and read only by a few: Douglas Hyde unwittingly achieved a compromise by combining a groundwork of English vocabulary with a number of turns, phrases, dialectal words, in which the influence of Irish syntax and Irish ways of thinking was directly felt. The efforts of this group drew to it young men of talent; literary or dramatic associations, and a national theatre, were successively created.[1]

Through its political and social aspect, which is of the highest interest, this movement is connected with the influences that have brought about the grant of independence to Ireland. It is not possible yet to form an impression as to what the literary life of the enfranchised nation may be; to foresee the ratio in which the British elements will be united with the purely native strains. In the eyes of the historian of literature, the course of the Celtic revival before 1914 is summed up in the study of the personalities who joined it, bringing with them, along with their talents, tendencies of a different nature, and sometimes singularly at variance among themselves.

With Yeats,[2] the affinities of temperament have been at work, exercising a secret magnetism on the rich fund of suggestions stored in the ancient spirit of Ireland, and extracting from it all that could be harmonised with the delicacy of a subtle art. His work is more thoroughly steeped than any other in the imagina-

[1] *The Love Songs of Connacht* (1893), of Hyde, are a first example of Anglo-Irish literature. The Irish National Literary Society was founded in 1892 in Dublin; the Irish National Theatre Society in 1903; the Abbey Theatre was opened in 1904.

[2] William Butler Yeats, born in Dublin in 1865, of Protestant family, imbibed the influences of his native land before coming into touch with those of England and the Continent; he collected *Poems and Ballads of Young Ireland*, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish* [illegible] *Tales*, 1890. His original work consists of [illegible] *of Oisin*, 1889; *Poems*, 1895; *The Wind* [illegible] *Responsibilities*, 1914; *The Tower*, 1928, etc.; collected studies [illegible] *Celtic Twilight*, 1893; *The Secret Rose*, 1897; *Ideas of Good and Evil*, 1903; *Discoveries*, 1907, etc.; dramas: *The Countess Cathleen*, 1892; *The Land of Heart's Desire*, 1894; *The Shadowy Waters*, 1900; *Cathleen ni Hoolihan*, 1902; *The Hour Glass*, *On Baile's Strand*, 1903; *The King's Threshold*, *The Pot of Broth*, 1904, *Deirdre*, 1907; *The Green Helmet*, 1910; *Four Plays for Dancers*, 1921. *Collected Works*, 1908; *Plays for an Irish Theatre*, 1911. See H. S. Krans, *W. B. Yeats and the Irish Literary Revival*, 1904; F. Reid, *W. B. Yeats, a Critical Study*, 1915; J. M. Hone, *W. B. Yeats*, 1916; M. L. Cazamian, "W. B. Yeats, poète de l'Irlande" (*La Vie des Peuples*, January, 1924).

tive mysticism which, we are told, is the essential attribute of Celticism. The deepest roots of this mysticism are in the old traditions of Ireland; its inspiration, no doubt, derives strong nourishment from the racy sap of the soil. But it draws as well from foreign and distant influences. India and her pantheism come in for a growing share in it; and French symbolism has been more and more responsible for the general manner of its expression. Yeats's poetry has become increasingly intellectual. It possessed, and still has, precious gifts of nature; it knew how to raise with words the spell of a mysterious atmosphere, how to efface the outlines of material objects in a dreamy mistiness, and to draw the most aerial and spare images upon this thin grey background, in the style of a Japanese engraving. A laboured and occasionally obscure reflection, with its intentions and studied effects, has since the time of his first collections of verse too often veiled those fugitive and charming glimpses. His own note, and the most striking, is still in the Ossian-like evocations, intensified by all the modern science of the inexpressible (*The Wanderings of Oisin*), and in the ethereal grace of his early poems.

It is no less definitely the lyricism of imagination that gives life to his dramas. Their value does not lie in the action or the characters. Beauty here arises from a tender or tragic symbolism, through which are dimly seen the features of sentiment and of reverie, or those of heroism and suffering, which mingle in the moral figure of Ireland. *The Land of Heart's Desire,* a little masterpiece, in which the wistful aspiration to the beyond, the eternal restlessness of unsatisfied hearts, are crystallised in a pure allegory; and *Cathleen ni Hoolihan,* in which the symbol rises to the breadth and poignant force of a patriotic emotion, are the highest achievements of this series of plays.

A conscious and truth-loving mind, Yeats is a penetrating analyst. He looses the complexes of temperaments and the complexities of values through the suppleness of his intuitions; he disentangles and classifies their shades by means of his lucid intelligence. He remains the poet in his judgments, and one whole side of his nature makes him akin to the school of critics moulded by the influence of the Elizabethans. His varied work will probably live, if enfranchised Ireland should give birth to an original literature, as a distinguished blending of the national

spirit with British and European culture; as a transition between the literary ideal of yesterday, and that of to-morrow, which bids fair to be more strongly individualised.

It is to the same fusion that the plays of Synge[1] owe their very intense character. In the present case the blending is bolder, so much so that a paradox seems to lurk in it; but as a compensation the result is more highly flavoured. The artistic sensibility of Synge obeys very different impulses. He too perceives the poetry of wonder, of which Irish imagination is so fond; he loves the sudden flights in which the spirited words of a tramp will soar to the highest utterance; he feels the thrills of the harsh glens of a wild land, the barbarous superstitions of its most backward nooks, the dramas which the sea enacts round its shores. But it is as a realist that he sees the mixture of epic and farce of which Irish life is often made; he exalts both tragedy and poetry to their greatest intensity at supreme moments, and on the other hand finds a broad, familiar, almost vulgar vein of comedy in the texture of daily experience. His studies of manners are thus pitched in the key of humour, for which Yeats made allowance less liberally. And the continental school of art, whose spell he feels and whose method he puts into practice, is that of naturalism. In Paris he has breathed the atmosphere of irony, of powerfully condensed style, of absolute submission to a trivial and disconcerting object, of philosophical and scientific bitterness, in which the "fin-de-siècle" literature is bathed. He has absorbed as well the stirring, moving influences blown from Russia and Scandinavia. Although the founders of the young Irish theatre are instinct with a spirit of reaction against the absolute sway which the Ibsenian model was wielding over the European stage, there is a suggestion of *Rosmersholm* in *The Shadow of the Glen*.

[1] John Millington Synge, born in 1871, of Anglo-Irish stock, studied at Trinity College, Dublin, sojourned in France, travelled in Italy and in Germany; on the advice of Yeats, he went in quest of primitive life and a virgin language to the Aran Islands, to the west of Ireland; wrote dramas: *In the Shadow of the Glen* (staged in 1903, published in 1905); *Riders to the Sea* (staged in 1904, published in 1905); *The Well of the Saints, The Playboy of the Western World, The Tinker's Wedding*, 1907; he published a descriptive study, *The Aran Islands*, 1907; *Poems* [illegible] leaving a drama, *Deirdre of the* [illegible] See Fr. Bickley, *J. M. Synge* [illegible], *J. M. Synge, a Critical Study*, [illegible]re, 1913.

The merry irreverent Ireland of *The Tinker's Wedding*, of *The Well of the Saints*, the naïvely and poetically unmoral Ireland of *The Playboy*, has thus inspired him no less, or even more, than that of the funeral lament, in which a peasant woman, weeping over the last of her sons, acknowledges the dark power of Fate in the very manner of Greek drama (*Riders to the Sea*). Synge died before he could express himself fully. While his work is highly esteemed by the cultivated élite and by a cosmopolitan public, it is subjected to impassioned discussion in his own country. Its note, indeed, jars surprisingly with the purpose of national idealisation which lives at the core of the Celtic revival. In the eyes of a foreign observer, this work deserves the credit of depicting some aspects at least of Ireland with a vigorous broad touch. The technique of Synge's dramas, though far from unexceptionable, is of high worth. His language is at the same time popular and artistic, and while eminently artificial, it is no less expressive and typical; it achieves to a unique degree the miracle of a dialectal colouring produced by the use of scrupulously English words, and gives "Anglo-Irish" its decisive model. It remains Synge's most valuable literary asset.

Besides Synge and Yeats, a less rapid survey should dwell at some length upon almost equally significant talents, like those of G. W. Russell,[1] whose serious poetry is instinct with a glowing pantheism; of Lionel Johnson,[2] who died prematurely, after writing delicately inspired verse and brilliant critical essays; of Lady Gregory,[3] one of the leaders of the Irish national theatre, the author of plays finely poised between comedy and farce; of Edward Martyn,[4] Padraic Colum,[5] James Stephens,[6] Katharine Tynan,[7] etc. The young Anglo-Irish literature has a wealth of

[1] George W. Russell, known by the pseudonym of "A. E."; born in 1867, a poet, painter, critic and economist, one of the noblest figures in the Irish intellectual movement. His poems comprise: *Homeward; Songs by the Way*, 1894; *The Earth Breath*, 1897; *By Still Waters*, 1906; *Deirdre*, 1907, etc. *Collected Poems*, 1913. See Darrell Figgis, *A. E.*, 1915.

[2] 1867-1902. *Poems*, 1895; *Ireland, with Other Poems*, 1897.

[3] Lady S. A. Gregory, born in 1852, popularised the folklore of Ireland, and wrote for the Abbey Theatre. *Gods and Fighting Men*, 1904; *Seven Short Plays*, 1909; *Irish Folk History Plays*, 1912; *New Comedies*, 1913; etc.

[4] Born in 1859. *The Heather Field*, 1899.

[5] Born in 1881; poet and dramatist; linked up the Celtic renascence with the movement for Irish independence.

[6] Born in 1882; poet and novelist. *Insurrections*, 1909; *The Crock of Gold*, 1912; *The Hill of Vision*, 1912, etc.

[7] Poet, novelist, critic. *Irish Love Songs*, 1892, etc.

original writers; but none of them seems so far to equal the masters of the previous generation. The fulfilled dream of national self-government sets this school a still unsolved problem, as to the choice it now has to make between the tradition of compromise, and the possibilities of cultural independence.

The ironical and detached personality of George Moore[1] evades this dilemma. *Through his origins, and at least one phase* of his career, he belongs to the Celtic revival; through his individualism, and his versatility, he belongs only to himself. He was, *however, intimately connected with this movement, and for a while* lent it the support of his pen, in exchange for an inspiration and the help of a group; but *when the community of interests thus realised* came to an end, he felt free in his autobiography to give the world the most piquant relation of the years when he had shared in a common illusion. It must be acknowledged that the works written under the sway of this illusion are somewhat artificial; for if George Moore's temperament shows in its making many and obvious Irish tendencies, the strongest is that of intellectual indiscipline.

It is difficult precisely to define the inner and special quality of his nature. One should not set too much store by the realism of his beginnings, since he was then strongly influenced by the literature of France The Goncourts, Zola, Huysmans, were his first masters. It seems possible, however, to assert that naturalism did answer to one of the deeper needs of his being, to that desire for a challenging frankness which his work has never ceased to reveal. In symbolism, again, another side of his mind found satisfaction. George Moore reconciles the audacity of crude, brutal observation with the sensuous refinement of a

[1] *George Moore, born in Ireland in 1852*, was the son of a Member of Parliament; educated privately, he had no material cares and devoted himself to literature. He resided for a considerable time in Paris, and under French influences formed his notion of art; wrote verse. *Flowers of Passion*, 1877; *Pagan Poems*, 1881; novels or short stories: *A Modern Lover*, 1883; *A Mummer's Wife*, 1884; *A Drama in Muslin*, 1886; *A Mere Accident*, 1887; *Mike Fletcher*, 1889; *Esther Waters*, 1894; *Celibates*, 1895; *Evelyn Innes*, 1896; *Sister Teresa*, 1901; *The* [illegible] *Impressions and Opinions*, [illegible] in his- [illegible] 1900; [illegible] : *Con-* [illegible] , *Vale*, [illegible] itchell,

voluptuous æsthete; the search for artistic emotions is with him a kind of idealism; and the keen interest which he takes in spiritual anguish, and which made its influence ever obscurely felt, has become in the long run one of his main motives. The author of *Flowers of Passion* and *Mike Fletcher* is as well that of *The Brook Kerith.*

His development reflects the course of a half-century; and in every chapter of recent literary history his work is sure of a mention. It represents one of the extreme stages reached, in Great Britain, by the contagious craving for aggressive truth which had come over from France; it sketches the paradoxical line which the demand for experimental truth followed, when it was deflected towards the quest for symbolical and refined imagination; again, it reveals the link that connects æstheticism with the Celtic movement; lastly, it shows the transition from the morbid restlessness of the "nineties" to the vague or precise religious yearnings of the twentieth century. At every stage of this changeful career, the care of form remains an element of conscientiousness and continuity. Neither the poet, nor the novelist, nor in the definite sense of the word the critic, is among the foremost writers of his kind. The man who stands behind them and makes them one is a figure of lasting interest, whose most original trait must probably be found in the witty mischievous verve of *Ave, Salve, Vale.*

5. *Francis Thompson.*—Francis Thompson [1] deserves to be studied apart. His talent shows extreme complexity. He belongs to his own time through the mysticism of his inspiration, and the symbolism of his vision. Moreover, as had been the case with the Romanticists of the early nineteenth century, the preferences of his taste return to the ardour and the freedom of the Elizabethans; but in him the desire for subtlety tends to outdo that for exuberance; and it is to the "metaphysical" poets of the seventeenth century that he chooses to give his homage. Lastly, he keeps, and pushes even farther, that search for a style en-

[1] Francis Thompson, born in 1860, the son of a doctor, studied medicine, which he abandoned for the theatre; experienced great hardship in London; was taken under the protection of Mr. and Mrs. Meynell, and published a volume of verse: *Poems*, 1893; then *Sister Songs*, 1895; *New Poems*, 1897. He died in 1907. An essay on Shelley appeared in 1908. *Selected Poems*, ed. by W. Meynell, 1911; *Works*, 3 vols., 1923. See K. Rooker, *Francis Thompson*, 1913; Everard Meynell, *Life of Francis Thompson*, 1913; R. L. Mégroz, *Francis Thompson*, 1927.

riched with elaborate ornament, which Keats illustrated pre-eminently, and by which the age which immediately preceded Thompson's had no less liked to soothe the classicism of its instincts. He thus appears as an original, but somewhat unstable and artificial, synthesis of manifold literary lines of descent; he unites the memory of Milton with that of Crashaw, the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites with that of Coventry Patmore. A temperament endowed with personal gifts saves him from unduly passive imitation.

The focus of his moral being is faith—he is a Roman Catholic, like the two poets whom he most deeply admires, Coventry Patmore and Crashaw. From this belief he draws the feeling of the divine in nature and man, and an earnest and delicate spirituality. His thought owes it no less the craving, an ever-unsatisfied one, for the intellectual formulæ in which reason, before its final abdication, attempts to grasp and solve the riddle of things. As his imagination and his ear, on the other hand, are fond of the polysyllabic sonorousness of rare compound words, and of the cadence of an ecclesiastical vocabulary, his highly wrought language has the golden radiance of a missal, and is not free from some scholastic affectation. At the opposite end of his range, he has moments of rapt simplicity, in which there is still heard an ecstatic and poignant note, which would reach the level of the highest art, were it not that the inner strain is betrayed by sudden breaks, occasional falls into spurious pathos or prosaism.

A talent linked to suffering, Thompson has written, amidst the pains of a grievous life, some masterpieces filled with a strangely sumptuous and ample harmony, in which amplitude and sumptuousness are not always reconciled, and in which poetry at times is the loser for their secret struggle. The instants of their union possess a supreme beauty, which reminds one of Keats; but even more beautiful are those in which breadth of inspiration predominates, and enforces its sway. *The Hound of Heaven* has a majesty, a fullness of utterance which go beyond the *Odes*, with their more ambitious orchestral effects and dazzling style.

Thompson's prose is a confirmation of his poetry; it shows that the refined archaism of the latter was rooted in his sincerest

instincts. His critical essay on Shelley has bold flights, and often striking felicities, of imaginative impressionism.[1]

To be consulted: M. Bourgeois, *John M. Synge and the Irish Theatre*, 1913; E. A. Boyd, *Ireland's Literary Renaissance*, 1916; idem, *The Contemporary Drama of Ireland*, 1917; O. Burdett, *The Beardsley Period*, 1924; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. xiii. chaps. v. vi.; vol. xiv. chaps. iii. vii. ix.; J. W. Cunliffe, *English Literature During the Last Half-Century*, 1920; Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen-Nineties*, 1913; H. A. Law, *Anglo-Irish Literature*, 1927; R. Le Gallienne, *The Romantic Nineties*, 1926; E. Meynell, *The Life of Francis Thompson*, 1913; L. R. Morris, *The Celtic Dawn*, 1917; B. Muddiman, *The Men of the Nineties*, 1920; W. L. Phelps, *The Advance of the English Novel*, 1916; E. T. Raymond, *Portraits of the Nineties*, 1921; P. de Reul, *L'Œuvre de Swinburne*, 1922; A. Symons, *Dramatis Personæ*, 1925; A. Thomas, *A. C. Swinburne, a Critical Study*, 1912; G. Turquet-Milnes, *The Influence of Baudelaire in France and England*, 1913; H. Walker, *The Literature of the Victorian Era*, 1910; H. Williams, *Modern English Writers*, 1920.

[1] By the piety of her remembrance as by the affinity of the religious sentiment, the name of Mrs. Alice Meynell is associated with that of Thompson. Born in 1850, she published *Preludes*, 1875; *Poems*, 1893; *Later Poems*, 1901. Her fine and discreet talent has a charming simplicity in the sober expression of the emotions.

CHAPTER IV

THE DOCTRINES OF ACTION

1. *The Rallying Purposes.*—The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth make up a single literary period. This means that the relative unity of some predominant characteristics makes itself felt. But the unity of this age consists in a unifying background of disquietude. The numerous tendencies with which it is stirred, after the breaking up of the Victorian equilibrium, lay at its core a deep-set restlessness through their divergence.

If the age is surveyed, however, in a wider perspective, its inner disorder is simplified into some sort of progression. Within the chronological limits thus laid down, a movement appears. The passing from one century to another actually answers to a change in thought. After 1900, the doctrines of action assert themselves; they attempt, each to its own advantage, to re-create the harmony of minds. The criticism which had been brought to bear on intellectualism had destroyed its prestige, without setting up anything in its place; the new Romanticism had freed imagination, desire and dream from all restraining rule, and had followed them on their adventurous ways. Before its course is run out, it renews itself through a last extension of its principle. The beginning of the twentieth century sees simple straight lines of energy and exertion, traced by the driving power of the will, draw themselves out more clearly over the confused background of a period at the same time Romantic and intellectual.

The self-assertion of the will is a revulsion of the vital instinct, a reaction against the deliquescence in which the nineteenth century had ended. This bracing up of moral energy, plainly announced and proclaimed by its apostles, coincides in Great Britain with a very definite hardening of the national purpose; the South African war, its first reverses, its uncertainties, the strain it calls for, the direct and primitive emotions it rouses, give the signal which a whole people has been waiting for with uneasiness, frightened

already or shocked as it was in its determination to live. The morbid elements of æstheticism, pessimism and decadentism are denounced and condemned; henceforth they hide themselves, and both society and literature are encouraged to feel free from a passing taint. It might seem as if the South African war, an accidental circumstance, had not been the deeper cause of events. An identical need in other countries—for example in France—was producing similar effects, without a war. The generation which comes to manhood after 1900 is bent on deciding through action the insoluble problems, over which the mind of its predecessor had vainly worried.

Action is the common theme of the doctrines which appeal to will. Through acting, it is sought to cure the conflicting desires of an undisciplined age. But as this lack of discipline is a moral fact, derived from the agitations of the soul, it makes itself felt as well in the plane of action. The doctrines which point out how to act are divided by mutual hostility. Divergent instincts are still the animating force of Kipling's imperialism, of Chesterton's traditionalism, of Shaw's and Wells's socialism; and these partial syntheses, confronting one another, introduce a simplified order into the war of tendencies, without putting an end to it.

These doctrines, at least in a certain sense, are of very similar nature; one outstanding psychological trait makes them alike. Each of them, aiming at social salvation by means of a strict convergence forced upon men's minds and hearts, demands a rallying of all purposes, and more or less imperiously points out the road that leads to it. Thus, in so far as their central endeavour is concerned, they all react against the disconnected aims of a period destitute of moral unity. They prepare the way for the desire of convergence which seems to be once more a trait of the period we are now entering; and for that organisation in which it would seem, from certain symptoms, that the after-war period were seeking the means of a new equilibrium, intellectual in its principle, and somewhat analogous to former classical phases.

2. *Imperialism: Henley; Kipling.*—Henley's [1] personality is

[1] William Ernest Henley, born in 1849 at Gloucester, led the life of an invalid; from his experiences in Edinburgh Hospital, he drew the material for his first poems; after a difficult beginning he published *A Book of Verses*, 1888; *The Song of the Sword* (later *London Voluntaries*), 1892; *Hawthorn and Lavender*, 1899; *For England's Sake*, 1900. He wrote for the stage in collaboration with his friend

more interesting than his work. He is a sign of a current of instinctive thought which has never ceased to flow obscurely through the life and literature of England since the sixteenth century; a current which had hardly ever before made itself plainly recognisable through direct expression, but which entered, mingled with other elements, into the doctrines or feelings of many thinkers. In the nineteenth century, Carlyle and Kingsley had most clearly revealed its presence and influence. Henley is a spiritual heir to both; but he is chiefly a contemporary of Kipling. His existence prevents the inspiration of *The Seven Seas* from standing out as an exception in its time, and connects it with a more normal background of sentiment.

He has the temperament of imperialism. It is only in some parts of his poems that he celebrates and worships the Empire; but the magnetism of its presence is always upon him; he carries within himself the emotions and desires whose united influence is even then stimulating the imperial religion, and imparting to it the fresh contagious power of a new-born faith. Henley's moral being finds its central unity in an intense reaction against the unhealthy subtlety of an over-refined civilisation; he knows intuitively the peril created by the weakening of national energy; he already possesses, and he discovers in himself, a remedy for this evil in the elementary and primitive virtue of effort. Being incapable of intellectual complexity, he protests against the corrupt search for the unfelt, through which the vitality of the race is running out. While his own body is disabled, he has that impassioned love of strength which many invalids feed on the purely internal exercise of the will. Probing below the culture of centuries, he reaches and brings back to daylight the ancient store of ancestral instincts. Beyond the spirit of the Elizabethan sea-dogs, it is that of the Anglo-Saxon pirates he seems at times to revive, so distinctly heathenish is with him the enthusiasm of fighting.

His rough lines have energy, a robust hold on reality. Their worth lies in the poetical transfiguring of the concrete, produced, not by imagination or by the spiritual sweetness which dissolves the hard cruel facts of life, but by an original idealising process,

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Stevenson; directed the *Outlook* and *National Observer;* collected his articles on literary and artistic criticism in two volumes of *Views and Reviews*, 1890-1901, and died in 1903. See the study by L. C. Cornford (*W. E. Henley*), 1913.

with simple sober devices. Whether the themes are the experiences of a patient in a hospital, or sights and scenes in the roaring turmoil of London, his method is a realism which the evocative power and the dense suggestive vigour of the phrasing raise to sudden heights. These soarings reveal an artist, whose range includes the audacity and the achievements of the most modern style of writing; his personal touch is the note of defiance, the abruptness of a man who, even while he spreads these felicities over his page, pretends not to condescend to the labour of form. Again, Henley is gifted with a sense of rhythm, knows how to handle the technique of his art, even practises it at times with some artificial fondness, in pieces where the national poet that he is allows himself to be tempted by the nimbleness of French metrical combinations; but he neither desires nor reaches the most subtle effects, and he is capable of the most jolting, careless lines. If he sings at all, it is in order to pay homage to his goddess—dangerous life, adventure, and the sacred battles of the Anglo-Saxon race; it is as well to tell his courageous philosophy, his vision of a world in which pain is alleviated only by love and noble risks.

As a journalist and critic, Henley was a fighter. His judgments were opinionated, often severe, and more brilliant than persuasive. So strong was the magnetic appeal of simple energy in an age of moral confusion, that his work and his manner attracted young talents. He was imitated, and exerted an influence.

However great the art of Kipling[1] may be, it is not looked

[1] Rudyard Kipling, born in Bombay in 1865, of parents of English birth and Wesleyan religion, spent his early years in India, received a secondary education in England, returned to India at the age of eighteen, took up journalism in addition to the study of Indian life, British officialdom and soldiering. He published a collection of verse: *Departmental Ditties*, 1886; Short stories: *Plain Tales from the Hills*, *Soldiers Three*, etc., *In Black and White*, *Under the Deodars*, *The Phantom Rickshaw*, etc., *Wee Willie Winkie*, etc., 1888. He set out for England by way of Japan and America, writing articles which were later collected in a volume (*From Sea to Sea*, 1900). Discovered by the English public about 1890, he tried his skill in a continued novel, *The Light That Failed*, 1891, and returned to the short story in *Life's Handicap*, 1891; *Many Inventions*, 1893; *The Jungle Book*, 1894; *The Second Jungle Book*, 1895; *The Day's Work*, 1898. A series of descriptive, didactic poems, meanwhile, illustrated the forces and horizons of the Empire: *Barrack Room Ballads*, 1892; *The Seven Seas*, 1896; *The Five Nations*, 1903. A new period opened with a novel, *Kim*, 1901; tales for the young (*Captains Courageous*, 1897; *Stalky and Co.*, 1899) now took the form of free inventions, of a more wonderful or historical colouring: *Just-So Stories*, 1902; *Traffics and Discoveries*, 1904; *Puck of Pook's Hill*, 1906; *Actions and Reactions*, 1909; *Rewards and Fairies*, 1910. Kipling wrote also: *A School History of England*,

at in a wrong perspective if the writer is replaced in a movement of the national consciousness, which he has chosen to serve. No less than to the history of literary forms, he belongs to that of the mind of a people. No one has done more to give permanence to the imperialist feeling in the making, by means of pregnant words, and of moving or stirring images and rhythms. It was in the years just before and after the South African war that there was widely diffused through Great Britain the political, moral and concrete notion of the Empire, a vast and varied commonwealth of lands and societies, linked to one centre by ties of origin, of interest and instinct. While statesmen grasped the possibilities included in a fact which their conscious will had never contributed to create, and were anxious to strengthen and develop it; while scientists explored it, studied its resources or told its progress, it was given to a man of letters to make it supremely and most deeply actual by implanting it among the familiar and intimate ideas of all men. It is from Kipling that to the majority of the English the existence of the Empire dates. Again, he has been most efficient in imparting to the scattered nations, born of a common mother, the active realisation of their human relationship both to her and to one another. His words have inwoven perhaps the strongest threads with the warp and woof of Empire.

The w[illegible] [illegible] himself with the moral destiny of [illegible] his birth, to express [illegible] India, he felt exotic influences before he trod the soil of England; his mental formation was mixed, and exceptional. He knew the so rigid frame of purely English society and manners only from the outside, before he could joyfully and proudly fit himself in. But there is no mystery about the whole process. Kipling's parents were both English, and of the Wesleyan denomination; they were thus directly connected with spiritual strains which are among the most average and typical in Great Britain. The skies of India, the hot wild breath of the jungle, quickened in the boy's

1912; *The Years Between*, 1919; *Letters of Travel*, 1920; *Land and Sea Tales*, [illegible] *Works*, Pocket ed. See the studies by Le Gallienne [illegible]; C. Charles (*Rudyard Kipling, Life and* [illegible] *to Poetry of Rudyard Kipling*), 1914, H. [illegible] *Study*), 1914; R. T. Hopkins (*Rudyard* [illegible]*ing*), 1915; J. L. Palmer (*Rudyard Kipling* [illegible] *Trois études de littérature anglaise*), 1921; [illegible] *Kipling*, by E. W. Martindell, 1922.

nerves a power of vivid sensation which is a constant trait of the Anglo-Saxon. The originality which he drew from the uprooting of his family has thus intensified in him the temperament of his race, without altering it. This more acute perception, turning to self-analysis, has through the sentiment of a personal difference thrown light upon the general and permanent background of common tendencies. As will be the case with the beings to whom initiation into the soul of a group comes late and consciously—people from overseas and naturalised citizens of all kinds—the mixed experience of Kipling's youth has stimulated in him, far from obscuring it, the inner possession of nationality.

The theme of the Empire appears in his writings from the first, but in implicit forms. It becomes gradually more definite; still the earliest tales in which British rule in India is shown at work temper their discreet panegyric with many touches of free irony. The simple heroism of the officer on the Afghan frontier, of the civil servant in famine time, of the engineer facing a flood, progressively turns into a privileged motive; the love of adventure glorifies all the pioneers and the reckless sons of the race; over lands and oceans, from the polar ice to the deserts of the torrid zone, the brotherhood of silent, stubborn effort appears. The characters of soldiers whom Kipling creates, and fills with a richly picturesque individuality, contribute to break down the barrier of ignorance which divided the professional army from the civilian population. From the *Barrack Room Ballads* to *The Seven Seas*, the progression is plain; in the latter, the destiny of the chosen people, called by Providence to explore, to exploit and to watch over the seas, and through them the continents, is the main inspiration of the series. Before the war in South Africa, Kipling had already discovered his patriotic vocation; he had become the prophet of the imperial ideal. *The Five Nations*, written after the war and its trials, proclaims the gospel of unity, such as it is, and must be.

The doctrine is first founded upon facts—those facts which Carlyle has already invested with an incomparable majesty. There are strong races, and weak ones; the clash between them is inevitable, and the victory of the strong is the wish of Nature. Kipling's philosophy accepts the lessons which his age feels entitled to draw from a diffused evolutionism. The past of the British race illustrates its robust hold on reality; its expansion is a

proof of its superiority in the struggle. To extol the solidarity which unites its scattered branches, is to increase its sense of vigour, and thus its vigour itself; it is to contribute to the fulfilment of fate. The conquering people is under moral obligations towards those whom it controls; but it will seek their good through ways of its own choosing; and meekness and humanity are an adornment which it owes to itself, the token of a strength which can be self-regulating, an insurance against the psychological risks of power. These spiritual softenings must never reach the deeper stores of an energy which is always to remain tight and ready for action. In the mutual intercourse of the British, stress is laid more plainly on reciprocal duties. The individual shall submit to the laws of the pack. He shall know how to suffer and keep silent, and sacrifice himself to the safety of the group. He shall have all the virtues which spring from self-mastery; for this mastery is justice, and charity has no other root. Education shall aim at shaping leaders. The worth of a man is measured by his ability to command either himself or others.

In course of time, this soldier-like code of ethics is eked out with the rough outline of a religious idealism. A Providence glimmers through the struggle for life. The mysterious restlessness which drives the sons of the race beyond the boundaries of the known, is the call of a holy mission. The Empire is a disinterested responsibility; it is the "white man's burden." Towards the God of the Bible, who has lavished his gifts upon His chosen people, their thanksgivings must rise, so that He may never forsake them. This free Christianity is not pharisaical; it implies no inner self-deceit. Its apparent lie answers to the sincere working of a thought which does not seek truth independently of action. Many other minds, both in England and elsewhere, have associated the religion of the Old Testament, or even that of Christ, with the triumphs of force. Kipling, here, finds himself on common ground with almost all the anti-intellectualists; and his point of view is not far distant from that of the supporters of authority and tradition in principle.

Upon this background of ideas, where neither much that is new, nor much that is noble enough to be morally revealing is to be found, and the creative power of which is derived from circumstances, the temperament of an exceptionally gifted writer stands

out in strong relief. Kipling possesses to the highest degree the ancestral faculty of concrete perception, unhampered by any interposed mist of mental culture. He has sensations of extraordinary intensity and variety, and takes in the most minute as well as the most overwhelming external appeals. An eminent gift of words sets off his faculty; or rather, a command of all the resources of language meets the working of sensitiveness halfway, helping the latter to increase its range and precision. Kipling knows how to turn all vocabularies to use; but he hardly chooses that of subtlety and of abstract shades, except to express humorous intentions, or, on rare occasions, a mood of poetical serenity; his special province is the vast domain of Germanic words, which are still loaded with primitive and direct meanings, and which a town-made civilisation tends to ignore and forget. He rediscovers them, and refreshes them through the strikingly expressive aptness of their use. To these he adds the various stocks of technical words, military and naval slang, terms borrowed from all the dialects of the Empire. The joy he feels in rare, sonorous, suggestive syllables, full of the odours and the hues of particular landscapes and things, is ever an essential element in the mental attraction which brings him to write; the verbal aspect of his intellectual activity is extremely developed. Therefore, neglecting or scorning the play of thought, he has bent his energy towards the material universe, its sights, its crises and struggles, and human souls in their forcible intercourse with it, whether in co-operation or in conflict.

The short story is the fittest frame for an art of intensity, in which strong effects are led to condensation of form by their very vigour. Kipling has shown an instinctive sense of this literary kind. Stages can be pointed out in his apprenticeship; but from the first attempt he is in this field a master. Into the atmosphere of the cultured circles of India, and that of an English secondary school, which he breathed, the spell of cosmopolitan artistic influences had found its way; the concentrated tales of Maupassant and his rivals had created an international model, the magnetism of which did not leave him untouched. Everything else, in his development, came from himself. He moves at ease in the limits of the short story, because his imagination knows no sure realisations but those of an immediate kind. The choice of a situation, of a tragic or comic unfolding of facts,

or a striking aspect of things, is an art to which Kipling brings the ready energy of his nature. The selection of the essential, the rejection of the accessory, owe their sureness to the same strength of unfailing mental vision. The conciseness of the style is made of the expressive force of each single word. The movement with which the narration is impelled strikes us as being that of direct experience; the successive phases in the story develop one from another with the pressing necessity of the moments when life, like a superior power, forces itself upon us. These numberless episodes are governed by a fate which is the subconscious judgment of the artist; it is often dramatic, at times ironical or indulgent, but always imperious.

The subjects thus treated make up altogether a vast picture of the world, or of the several provinces which the writer singles out according to the preferences of his tastes, of his more familiar acquaintance. Kipling's short stories organise themselves readily into cycles. There is one of India, with the life of the English in the foreground, and occasional glimpses into the strange, picturesque, disquieting underworld of native manners; that of the army and colonial campaigns; that of the navy or the merchant fleet; that of travel and exoticism; that of steam and machines; that of realism, with some inlets of social study; that of the supernatural and the marvellous; that of the animal universe, and the jungle. Each of them has its special surroundings, described with broad evocative touches. Wrought up and developed landscapes are rare with Kipling; but so efficient is the power of his vision and of his language, that he fills us with the constant presence of Nature, felt in all the moods of the earth, the sky and the waters; and bathes all our senses in her irresistible radiance. Accentuated states, violent effects, are sought by him rather than notes of sweetness and grace. It is only in the latest phase of his career that he seems to have evinced, when treating English subjects, a new fondness for the half-tones and sober accents of a country with an old humanised charm. Whatever he may purpose to describe, each one of his words calls up more shapes, and invests them with richer sensitive appeals, than those of any English writer before him.

In those descriptions, and in the life lent to inhuman things, from the jungle and the wind to the engine of a steamer—seized as they are inside with an extraordinary intuition, animated in a

manner comparable to that of Shelley's poetry, but with an existence less uniformly quivering, more distinct, colder, and so to say more objective—lies the outstanding quality of this picture of the world. The effects of strangeness, of anguish, even of mystery, are also one of the fruitful resources of Kipling's art; they superadd to the dramatic intensity of experience, and to the overwhelming grandeur of the universe, a something which belongs to a higher order, a more subtle element, a kind of poetry. This impassioned lover of nature is alive to the supernatural; and his positive mind is no less mystic, as is revealed, for example, by that poem of the secret and obstinate worship of an intangible ideal, *To the True Romance.* On the contrary, the properly human aspects of his tales move us less vividly.

The reason is not that he fails to draw characters that our sense of reality can accept. It would be a hasty and unjustified assumption to conclude that his genius is restricted to the scope of the short story, and that his longer tales—*The Light That Failed, Kim,* etc.—are of inferior worth. These novels have merits of their own, and the latter reaches a breadth of range in the picture of a very complex and very special world, which by itself justifies it. They both give ample scope to psychology; and the personages on whom the light is focused are outlined with a remarkable, though simplified clearness. On the whole, however, Kipling does not burrow very deep into the souls of men, nor does he care to do so. Human beings are to him summed up in a few significant features, which exhaust the substance of a personality because they reveal, at one stroke, all that it is material we should know, to our sense of action or of the picturesque. Minute and gratuitous analyses are not to his taste; he feels that they are injurious to the health of the inner life, and to that of art. Only the speaking traits of faces, and the expressive countenances of souls, are interesting to him. The figures he has created are most often distinguished by an unforgettable individuality of outline. In what concerns psychology, the subjects which he has treated with the greatest partiality, and the best success, are those where the very nature of the characters admits of and indeed demands simplicity—varieties of the soldier type, fully individualised and highly flavoured, but of rather rudimentary intelligence; schoolboys and growing young

men; before all, *those wonderful sketches of animals*, each having its natural shape, and at the same time a moral personality fitted *to this shape* with astonishing sureness. In many respects, the *Jungle Books* are, if not Kipling's masterpiece, at least his most representative work.

With no writer are the prosaist and the poet more closely connected, or do they show a more indissoluble unity. The matter, and the inspiration, are with both the same; Kipling's poetry hardly intensifies the denseness of a prose already so energetic and solid. Rhythm only adds to it a musical element, in which tones of vigour exclusively predominate, and which, *rather primitive as its artistic quality may be, still produces the* desired effects with an often absolute felicity. These effects *belong mostly to the sphere of concrete suggestion*, imitative harmony, the joy of physical exertion and humour; at times, to that of mysteriousness and dream. Although alliteration does not play any regular prosodic part in the verse of Kipling, it is so frequent, and so efficacious, that it betrays an instinctive affinity of the metre with the Anglo-Saxon line. This poetry is thus altogether rough and popular; its style and lilt remind the reader of the old English ballads; and its tone, its themes, its language, clashed so abruptly and strongly with the elegant refinement of *the followers of* Pre-Raphaelitism and of Tennyson, that to many [illegible] r public was [illegible]

For into their brutality, cynicism, or prosaic vulgarity, those poems infuse the flavoured or intoxicating essence of a vision of things which lacks neither grandeur, nor heroism, nor beauty. The *Barrack Room Ballads*, though very unequal, often approach a perfect fullness of expression through the still untapped resources of slang or of the most naïve language; while in *The Seven Seas, The Five Nations,* the outlook grows wider; here it is actually the annals and glories of the Empire that are sung; and if *these hymns savour in no way of official pomp*, their dignity is made up of the oldest as well as the most living claims; the words which they use are *at the same time those of the English* Bible, and of the crowd of the workers—colonists, soldiers, sailors, *civil engineers, engine drivers*—who have created the strength of the Empire. In spite of all, Kipling's poetry has a

democratic ring, and in some respects it resembles that of Whitman. He has written no more elaborate study of a soul than *MacAndrew's Hymn;* and the epic breadth of many pieces, such as *The Rhyme of the Three Sealers,* is surpassed by nothing in modern English literature.

There is still another Kipling, that of subdued tales, in which the supernatural strain is nearer to tradition, and where the elves and fairies of Shakespearean folklore revive; whose inspiration is not only imperial, but precisely English; and where in the idyllic scenery of Sussex the succession of ages upon an ancient land is called up by a smilingly fanciful imagination. Nationalism here is gilded with an evening beam, which spreads a serene peace over its haughty brow; one seems to feel, along with a melancholy note, a new toleration, and almost an intellectual relativism. In this light is now drawing to its end the career of a writer who is still vigorous, but reached the heights of artistic achievement too early to maintain himself at his own level. *Puck of Pook's Hill, Rewards and Fairies* are charming works; a lesser talent might build his reputation upon them; but they no longer bear the stamp of genius.[1]

3. *Traditionalism: Chesterton, etc.*—The unrest felt by minds which science and reason left confronted with an impassive universe, becomes with the advent of the twentieth century a more active moral force, because it feels itself in more secure sympathy with a movement of opinion. Instead of seeking an outlet in dreams, philosophy, or pessimism, energetic temperaments, instinctively in tune with life or swayed by the need of faith, are thus led to put forth an aggressive justification of their demands. They denounce the present, its materialism, its uncertainties; they seek their truth, the peace of the soul, a stable order, in the traditions of the past. Against destructive intelligence, they set up intuition; against the modern disquietude of souls, the happy self-confidence of simple believing ages; against industrial ugliness, the healthy frugality of agricultural civilisations. Taken together, these tendencies are psychologically very similar to those which supported, fifty years earlier, the movement of idealistic protest whose leaders were Carlyle and Ruskin. Like

[1] By virtue of their patriotic inspiration and central theme, the sea, the poems of Sir Henry Newbolt (born in 1862; poet and critic) rank next to those of Kipling. *Collected Poems,* 1910.

causes produce like effects; and round Chesterton may be grouped writers with whom the longing for a more authoritative, more humane or more picturesque society recalls, at times unconsciously, the eloquent regrets of the prophets of the previous age.

In the field of practice, their desires do not necessarily assume a concrete aspect; they remain often vague; it is in indirect ways that they contribute to action. They swell and confirm a complex of diffused aims, of religious, social, political preferences, which make up one of the two antithetical systems in the literature and thought of the present-day world. Conservative traditionalism, the enemy in principle of pure reason, and in tendency opposed to almost all the changes effected or demanded on the strength of rational programmes, does not to-day occupy so important a place in English letters as it does in France; moreover, it is on an average less strictly negative. But the writers who, with Chesterton, bring an indictment against reason, are, in fact, antagonistic, on almost every point, to the radical theses of a Shaw and a Wells. Their influence, strengthened by the philosophical fortune of pragmatism, tends to dispossess the principle of free intellectual inquiry of the control which it had apparently arrogated to itself over both mental and civic life. They may call themselves democrats, and even reformers; but their programme goes to fortify the established order. They may believe themselves independent of religious dogmas; but the effort of their faith harmonises with the teaching of churches; and a deep-set affinity directs them towards the Roman Catholic idea. They stand in a natural league with the forces of authority round which, before and chiefly since the shock of the war, the instinctive desires for resistance and stability have been gathering.

These forces, in Great Britain, are less bent than in France upon finding a justification for themselves in theory; they are rooted in habits, interests, corporations, government, and this guarantee is to them sufficient. To their still undiminished strength, the number of writers or artists who invest their prestige with logical cogency, with attractiveness or with poetry, bears no adequate proportion. On the whole, English literature and art at the present time are instinct with a spirit of moral independence and social criticism; the free search for new values is with them in the ascendant; and the apostles of traditionalism are neither the more numerous nor the more eminent group.

G. K. Chesterton[1] is the champion of orthodoxy. To this word he has given a more and more substantial meaning; the logic of his thought has led him to the fold of the Roman Catholic Church, which he has joined at the same time in principle, and as a convert. An optimist, a lover of life, he derides vehemently the modern errors which prey upon the frank merry health of the heart: Puritanic sourness, pessimistic morbidity, the unrest of minds that have lost, along with faith, their very balance; and most of all, the most serious disease of our time, the reasoning mania of unregulated intelligences. The methods of science and philosophy are arbitrary; their conclusions are distressing only to those fools who have gratuitously bound themselves up with their chimerical endeavour. The perceptions enclosed in the experience of the centuries contain the substantial treasure of reliable things, the things which help one to live; religion is the common background of all those perceptions; and authority, which gathers all minds into one essential belief, is the soul of religion. The necessary submission of the individual will be the foundation of his freedom. Our industrial civilisation has reduced mankind to slavery; and the panacea of rational theorists, State socialism, makes the serfdom of every one only worse. Economic harmony, just like the fraternity of hearts, can be revived by an enlightened return to the ideal of the Middle Ages. The eager swarming activity of the old trade associations gave normal and healthy satisfactions both to selfishness and to the group-spirit. That fanciful work, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, is not thus without a direct connection with the precise teaching of the apostles of the new "guilds."

Here, as elsewhere, the dogmatic thought at the bottom is hidden under the most flippant manner. Chesterton's wisdom prides itself on avoiding the paradoxes of reason pushed to an

[1] Gilbert Keith Chesterton, born in London in 1874, studied at the Slade School of Art; began as an art critic and collaborated in reviews; published studies on *Browning*, 1903; *Dickens*, 1906; *G. B. Shaw*, 1909; *The Victorian Age in Literature*, 1913; novels: *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, 1904; *The Man Who Was Thursday*, 1908; *The Ball and the Cross*, 1910; *Manalive*, 1912; works of critical and philosophical discussion: *Heretics*, 1905; *Orthodoxy*, 1908; *What's Wrong with the World?* 1910; short stories: *The Innocence of Father Brown*, 1911, etc.; *Poems*, 1915; and *The Crimes of England*, 1915; *The Uses of Diversity*, 1920, etc. See J. West, *G. K. Chesterton, a Critical Study*, 1916; P. Braybrooke, *G. K. Chesterton*, 1922; G. Bullett, *The Innocence of G. K. Chesterton*, 1923; J. de Tonquédec, *G. K. Chesterton, ses idées et son caractère*, 1927.

absurd excess; and obeying a sort of compensatory need, it jingles noisily the bells of a paradoxical invention. His literary temperament is that of a humorist, bent upon refreshing a severely traditional doctrine through the constant unexpectedness of the style. A belief in the fruitful novelty of the most ancient truths: such is the motive behind those verbal variations, upon themes which are overgrown to the point of being lost sight of; the movement and the tricks of the style are, as it were, a visible effect of that inner conviction. This assurance it is that justifies the uninterrupted search for piquant modes of expression: the banality of the idea not only demands, but deserves them. The talent of Chesterton has succeeded in instilling new life into many truisms; and the originality of his orthodoxy does not lie exclusively in the humour with which it is presented: common sense, when all is said, is the most precious and the least commonplace vein of thought. But he has not subjected his spontaneous manner to the control of a sufficiently exacting artistic conscience; the quality of his improvisations is very unequal; and although his personality possesses the value of a sign, only few among his writings do not bear the stamp of the ephemeral.

The same general fund of ideas is to be found in the works of H. Belloc,[1] poet, novelist, critic, essayist, controversialist. The unity underlying his very various, and no less unequal literary creations, might be traced to a spirit of audaciousness and adventure, which is ever bidding defiance to cautious ways and routine-loving fears. Routine and timidity are all, in the eyes of H. Belloc, on the side of cool reason, and of those scientific systems of knowledge which are forcing a hopeless monotony upon the world. His aim, and an often successful one, is to strike out a gushing freshness and surprise from all the happenings of the wayside; to embroider an unsubstantial matter with the most profuse arabesques; to feel and reveal the beauty of the earth, the unexpectedness of familiar prospects, the wealth of life. The lack of responsibility in a thought which does not revolve round a

[1] Hilaire Belloc, born in 1870 near Paris, of a French family of Catholics, was brought up in England, studied at Oxford; became naturalised English in 1903; Member of Parliament from 1906 to 1910; published poems: *Verses and Sonnets*, 1895, etc., travel tales: *The Path to Rome*, 1902, etc.; novels: *Emmanuel Burden*, 1904, etc.; essays. *On Nothing*, 1903, etc., political studies: *The Servile State*, 1912, etc., See *The Bookman*, No 45 (1915); study by C. C. Mandell and E. Shanks, 1916.

fixed axis, and does not care to have one, because its centre of gravity is beyond the plane of logic, deprives this mental energy of all lasting influence upon many minds. But H. Belloc's paradoxes are more careful than those of Chesterton; his manner is freer from tricks; while he has not the same vigour, he possesses a more varied and surer charm of expression.

The affinities of intellectual temperaments make it possible to class with those two free-lances of tradition a writer who, without taking a direct share in the conflicts of ideas, allowed the persuasive preferences of his imagination to emanate from his work. Maurice Hewlett[1] lived in the past; his subdued Romanticism, cured of all fever, found a refuge from the present in the nobility and beauty of chivalrous ages; against the realism of a positive century he set up the refinements of an art which was not afraid of affectation, since literature is essentially the artistic instrument to re-create an unattainable ideal. In his verse, he sang the joys and pains of the peasant, the man upon whom English greatness rested until the baneful reign of machines began. There is no explicit call to action here; the theme and the tone would rather suggest a pessimism like Hardy's were it not that a braced energy, and the will to find spiritual salvation in effort, instil a religious soul into this otherwise detached æstheticism.

The tightening of moral will in a society which the crisis of the decadent age had alarmed, can also be traced in the success of a novelist, E. F. Benson,[2] who knew how to bring talent, wit, sentiment, a fine knowledge of worldly manners, to the task of furthering the desire for order, enforced by the firmer instinct of a generation which was taking its own cure in hand. This return to moral faith is perceptible as well in Edward Thomas,[3] whose prematurely interrupted work shows a delicate intuition, a personal gift of poetic expression.

Lastly, it is no paradox to rank with the defenders of tradition a writer who figured, for a time, as an intrepid mouthpiece

[1] Maurice Hewlett (1861-1923), advocate and magistrate, published imaginative or historical novels: *The Forest Lovers*, 1898; *The Life and Death of Richard Yea-and-Nay*, 1900; *The Queen's Quair*, etc., 1904; poems: *Helen Redeemed*, etc., 1913, etc.

[2] Edward Frederic Benson, born in 1867; *Dodo*, 1893; *Dodo the Second*, 1914, etc.

[3] Edward Thomas, born in 1878, killed in action, 1917; published critical studies and poems: *Collected Poems*, 1920.

of the spirit of criticism: Mrs. Humphry Ward.[1] Brought up under intellectual influences, she wrought the conflict between literal faith and the new exegesis into a story of lasting significance *(Robert Elsmere)*. It was already apparent that her temperament was leading her to conservative solutions; but her having outspokenly interpreted certain anxious qualms was set down, not undeservedly, to the boldness of her spirit. The inexperienced, moving vigour of this drama of the conscience lost its edge in the following novels, almost always built on the clash of principles or forces, but in which philosophical breadth is endangered by a gradually narrowing perception. Whether the matter studied is a religious crisis, a political career, a sentimental knot, or poverty, and the palliatives which charity can apply to it, the social aspect of the struggling tendencies is blurred by the atmosphere of an essential conventionality. Stripped of their actual rawness, the problems treated lose much of their convincing humanity. The picture of aristocratic circles, however, keeps its genuine value. The psychology in Mrs. Ward's novels has all the merits of painstaking analysis, not those of unerring creation. The style, laborious as it is, speaks to the intelligence, not to the imagination. A generous-minded writer thus enslaves herself, of her own free will, to the respectabilities of every kind, which she looks up to as laws. The very sense of the future vanishes; all the solutions presented tend to maintain the salutary hierarchy of things; nothing remains but the sincere, and not undignified, clinging of instinct to a society from whose system of precedency and rules it derives almost complete satisfaction.[2]

4. *Socialism: Shaw, Wells; etc.*—English socialism was born in the stormy years of the early Victorian period; it subsided during the middle years of prosperity and balance; it awoke into new life before the end of the nineteenth century. Its economic

[1] Mary Arnold (1851-1920), niece of Matthew, born in Tasmania, married Mr. Humphry Ward; after the resounding success of *Robert Elsmere*, 1888, she published *The History of David Grieve*, 1892; *Marcella*, 1894; *Sir George Tressady*, 1895; *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, 1898; *Eleanor*, 1900; *Lady Rose's Daughter*, 1903; *The Marriage of William Ashe*, 1905; *Fenwick's Career*, 1906; *The Case of Richard Meynell*, 1911; *The Coryston Family*, 1913, etc. See her autobiography (*A Writer's Recollections*, 1918); *The Life of Mrs. Humphry Ward*, by J. P. Trevelyan, 1923, the studies by J. S. Walters (*Mrs. Humphry Ward, Her Work and Influence*), 1912; S. L. Gwynn (*Mrs. Humphry Ward:* Writers of the Day), 1917.

[2] Other writers who have figured or who will figure later, from the point of view of their dominant characteristics, under other headings, could naturally be added to these.

doctrine was moulded into more precise shape by the combined influences of the Marxian system, of Henry George (*Progress and Poverty*, 1880), and of a group of men upon whom the seal of national characteristics is plainly set, the Fabian Society. Thenceforth, an abundant literature of explanatory tracts or polemical treatises develops round the theme of the social problem. A large number of thinkers, theorists and artists give expression to more or less open sympathies for socialism, without making it a main issue in their works. But some gifted writers, following William Morris's example, bind up their intellectual destiny with its cause. The part played by this movement in the growth of their ideas is so important that they can be studied from no other point of view. However independent their critical judgments may remain, this positive conviction is one of the central beliefs upon which their lives and thoughts are hinged.

Bernard Shaw,[1] like every interesting thinker, is not reducible to simple terms. The set purpose of aggressive clear-sightedness upon which he has chosen to concentrate himself hides many a shade in his inner mood; and at the present day, the unbending

[1] George Bernard Shaw, born in 1856 in Dublin, of Protestant middle-class family and English descent, was early conscious of a literary calling; after various occupations, he lived by his pen as a journalist, then dramatist. His novels, *The Irrational Knot, Love Among the Artists, Cashel Byron's Profession, An Unsocial Socialist*, written between 1880 and 1886, and published at a later date, had no success. As a socialist he has taken an active part in the Fabian movement, has written several "tracts," notably the manifesto of the group (1884); and *The Impossibilities of Anarchism*, 1891; *Fabianism and the Empire*; *The Common-Sense of Municipal Trading*, 1904; *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, 1927, etc. Art critic, then dramatic critic of the *Saturday Review*, 1895-98, he published *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, 1891; *The Perfect Wagnerite*, 1898; his *Dramatic Opinions and Essays* were collected in 1906. The chronology of his plays is complicated; the interval between the composition and the production has often been long; several have been banned by the censor. Their great success in England dates only from the beginning of the twentieth century. The first comedy, *Widowers' Houses*, was written between 1885 and 1892, and staged in 1893; then came *The Philanderer, Mrs. Warren's Profession, Arms and the Man, Candida, The Man of Destiny, You Never Can Tell* (published under the title of *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant*, 1898); *The Devil's Disciple, Cæsar and Cleopatra, Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (*Three Plays for Puritans*, 1901); *Man and Superman*; 1903; *John Bull's Other Island*; *Major Barbara*; *How He Lied to Her Husband*; *Press Cuttings*; *The Doctor's Dilemma*; *Getting Married*; *The Shewing up of Blanco Posnet*; *Misalliance*; *Fanny's First Play*; *Androcles and the Lion*; *Overruled*; *Pygmalion*; *Great Catherine*, before 1914. On the declaration of war, he rubbed up against national sentiment by publishing *Common-Sense About the War*. His further contributions to the theatre are: *The Inca of Perusalem*; *Augustus Does His Bit*; *Heartbreak House*; *Back to Methuselah*, 1920; *Saint Joan*, 1923, etc. See the studies by G. K. Chesterton, 1910; A. Henderson, 1911; C. Cestre, 1912; A. Hamon, 1913; J. MacCabe, 1914; J. Palmer, 1915; P. P. Howe, 1915; R. E. Burton, 1916; H. Skimpole, 1918; H. C. Duffin (*Quintessence of Bernard Shaw*), 1920; E. Shanks, 1924; J. S. Collis, 1925.

of a mind which looks back over a long and fruitful career allows those shades to come out more clearly. His literary figure, however, can be sketched in a few strokes of the brush. His predominant characteristic is a fearless intellectual criticism. This is not original, to speak properly. It brings to a focus the tendencies of an age when the break-up of Victorian balance sets intelligence free as well as feeling; it finds its inspiration in the new audacity with which the diverging forces assert themselves in every direction. Whatever may be Bernard Shaw's indebtedness to Nietzsche, Ibsen, Wagner, Karl Marx—and to the last three, at least, he is, no doubt, largely indebted—he had in England an immediate precursor, whose disciple he confessed himself. The principles of his criticism, and even the objects to which he applies them, are, indeed, very similar to those of Samuel Butler, the author of *Erewhon*. The analogy is deep-laid and striking; and it stretches even further than might be inferred from the differences of the themes and artistic forms.

However, Bernard Shaw has a personal temperament. He possesses to the highest degree inventiveness, wit, humour. He knows admirably how to animate ideas, make them live; and, most of all, how to set them up one against another, and conduct an intellectual debate. He has thus invested the most serious thoughts with the exuberant liveliness of form. He has, before G. K. Chesterton, devoted a very similar method, but of superior vigour, to the furtherance of a directly contrary cause. While Samuel Butler would enclose a corrosive meaning in a restrained and mystifying expression, Shaw has popularised the satire of all values, by throwing upon it the light of plain irresistible comedy. Such was the need of his individual genius; such, again, was the optics of the medium—the drama—which he chose for his own. The boldest outbreaks of intelligence had always, in England, found acceptance through a pretended lightness of tone. The author of *Hudibras* said the most subversive things comically; Swift's *Gulliver* clothed his cruel intentions with mockery. When selecting comedy as his instrument, Bernard Shaw was following that tradition, and obeying a just instinct. Laughter relieves the strain of a contrast too forcibly felt between human conventions, and facts; it is to the writer the most natural alleviating outlet; to the spectator or the reader, it is the most pleasant and the easiest alternative to what would be the bitterness of a deliberate

adhesion. Laughter allows one to tolerate irreverence without condoning it; and while tolerating it, to be somewhat infected by it. Therefore Bernard Shaw was an entertainer, but with no loss to his dignity. He ascended the stage, not booth boards. His manner is no grimace, but the practice of a mental hygiene. It is also an efficient practical policy. To charge him with gratuitous and systematic paradox, or self-advertisement—as is still too often done—is decidedly unjust; his thought is coherent and serious; he fights not for himself, but for his ideas. Samuel Butler had been misunderstood or ignored; he set himself to win the audience of the general public, and won it.

As compared with his master, he has still a further originality than the more or less clever staging of a doctrine common to both. When confronted with the economic structure of society, Butler's pitiless criticism had abdicated. Even here Bernard Shaw is no creator; he has read Karl Marx and Henry George. But he brings a courageous clear mind to the study of social problems; and for the first time in Great Britain, he fits in their proposed solution with a general rationalist criticism. William Morris's initiative had had a more limited scope, because his intellectual outlook was not so broad; his socialism had not been embodied in a whole system of philosophical opinions, deduced from the sole search for truth. Bernard Shaw has thus added a province, and not the least extensive, to the domain in which an Englishman led by a sincerely free mind may find himself in a conflict with the established order of ideas or facts.

Bernard Shaw's socialism has undergone a change. Dogmatic at first, and leaning to radical solutions, it was mitigated, in his early manhood, under the influence of a realism more keenly aware of facts; it has gradually drifted away from Marxian orthodoxy, and has even ceased to harmonise with the average thought of the Fabian group. The various instincts of his nature have successively expressed themselves through it; his strongly marked individualism has imbued it with anarchist tendencies, the connection of which with the firm organisation of collectivism has not always been plainly visible. His fundamental lack of respect has broken out in sallies and gibes aimed at the mediocrity or weakness, from which neither the men nor the ideas of a movement that had his allegiance were free. But his mind has not recanted the indictment which it had drawn up

against what is to him economic disorder, and the unjust distribution of goods. His deepest honesty is bound up with it. With all the strength of his intellectual faith, on the contrary, he still accepts the principle and the hope of a rational reorganisation of society.

His other tenets agree well enough with the resolution implied in this attitude; and also with the faculty of zeal and enthusiasm—were it even an abstract enthusiasm—but for which those passions of the mind cannot be lasting. Socialism may have won converts by its arguments; but no one ever remained a socialist for motives of pure theory. Bernard Shaw's youth was touched with the fire of Shelley-worship. The negative aspect of his ideas, however, is the more prominent. A pugnacious writer, he has chiefly been an iconoclast The motive-power which impels him is his keen realisation of the unconsciousness in which the official, normal thought of his time is still living. The strenuous criticism of thinkers has probed under the very foundations of Victorian orthodoxy; and the self-satisfaction in which that age dwelt, secure as it was in its opinions, its institutions, its ethics, suddenly assumes, under the acid test of intelligence, the character of an essential laziness and cowardice.

As Samuel Butler had done, Shaw tears off veils, and lays bare the half-voluntary illusions of complacently blind souls. Taking his stand on his property rights, an honest man may be directly responsible for a social sore (*Widowers' Houses*). In a régime of economic laissez-faire, a procuress is just a person in trade (*Mrs. Warren's Profession*). Military heroism is an invention of the civilians (*Arms and the Man*). A worthy clergyman, conscious of his philanthropy, eloquence, and idealism, may be at the same time in the clear-sighted eyes of his wife a harmless and defenceless man of words (*Candida*). The moral authority of parents is an antiquated fiction (*You Never Can Tell*). The sentimental convention of passiveness in feminine manners hides the pursuit of that prey, the husband, by the girl, that hunter (*Man and Superman*). John Bull boasts of his practicality; but he is just a green sentimentalist when confronted with the Irishman (*John Bull's Other Island*). In a society based on money, it is mere hypocrisy not to confess that poverty is an epitome of all vices (*Major Barbara*). On the strength of his professional duty, a physician may be guilty of actual crimes (*The Doc-*

tor's Dilemma). Marriage no longer corresponds either to a fact, or to an ideal *(Getting Married)*. And so on. Thus the family, property, religion, science, and all the virtues from which society derives the comforting assurance of its moral worth, are vitiated by an inner life.

The counterpart of all this is not far to seek. Since all social evils are caused by the lack of intellectual courage, the cure in every case must be sought in the logic of a courageous thought. Bernard Shaw's logic obeys the dictates of his own nature; and here it is that the particular shades of his temperament reveal themselves. His reason leads him to profess a socialism tempered with anarchy; to preach an ethics of ascetic simplicity; to bring love, the family, and the future of the species, under the disciplinary law of a common sense improved with "eugenics"; to turn the "superman" into a biological and near reality. But it leads him even further: to confute Darwin by means of Lamarck, as Samuel Butler had done; to set up vitalism against materialism; to discover at the core of the universe a "Life-Force" which is at first that of Schopenhauer, but tends to become that of Bergson; to trace a current of Divine will in the apparently fatal flood of events. . . . A proclaimed enemy of sentimentalism, he still thus allows revealing emotions to act and speak within some regions of his own being; he has his intuitive moments. The stamp of the Bible on his childhood and education has never, in fact, been effaced from the mind of Bernard Shaw. One of his last works *(Back to Methuselah)* seems to open the religious phase in which H. G. Wells had preceded him.

Those theses, whether positive or negative, are exactly fit to stir out of its apathy the wider English public, little inclined as a rule to intellectual criticism. But they were diffused, about the end of the nineteenth century, in the very atmosphere of European thought. The international success of Bernard Shaw's drama is not due to the novelty or to the intrinsic value of his philosophy. Half-way from the abstract to the concrete, there are intermediary stages: the sensible aspects of those relations that the mind establishes, between the terms which pure analysis has brought out. Bernard Shaw perceives these relations as human and social facts. Therefore his imagination is that of the novelist or the playwright; and as he is much less gifted for patient studies of surroundings and characters than for the

vivacious, clashing, and striking expression of ideas, his talent has found itself in a special variety of comedy, in which discussion, the argument between animated and personified opinions, holds first place.

This literary form to-day answers one of the permanent tastes of the cultivated public; but it demands, if it is to be at all dramatic, that the warring principles shall be blended with the instincts of living personalities. Borrowing from Ibsen the general outline of his dramas of ideas, Bernard Shaw has not often succeeded, like him, in creating such conflicts of tendencies as would set at war human beings roused by the elementary passions of their natures. There lies the most serious flaw of his drama. The larger number of his personages are instinct only with the life of intelligence, and are but the mouthpieces of the author. Many of his plays degenerate into endless dialogue, in which the brilliancy of the verve cannot hide the artificiality of the situation. Profound dramatic life is most often lacking in his work. The reason is that emotion, the mainspring of interest, is almost constantly wanting. Bernard Shaw's characters bear the mark of the conscious will which has given them birth; few among them stir us with human sympathy. The oppositions that make them stand one against another, or the attractions that unite them, are very rarely sources of pathos. Their very feelings, when brought into play, seem dry and merely cerebral. Few are the moments when the fictitious beings who move before us are suddenly lighted up with a mysterious poignant beauty; when their lips utter words that seem to come from a depth which analysis cannot probe. *Candida* perhaps has most of those transitory gleams; and this play, the most Ibsen-like and the least plainly intelligible Bernard Shaw has written, might be his dramatic masterpiece.

On the other hand, those plays fully possess the animation which can rise from the incessant stimulation of intelligence. Bernard Shaw displays all the resources of an original, though limited art in bringing the characters, or rather the symbols, that confront one another, to join issue; in giving an edge to the expressions of their conflicts, and in striking out flashing formulæ from their collisions. Always substituting himself for them more or less, when the time comes, the author addresses us; and then it is that there are unrolled before us in brilliant procession the "para-

doxes" whose effect of surprise, either piquant or revolting or revealing, is the essential element in the scenic life of those comedies. The mode of their rise is still the same: divesting a fragment of reality of its crusted conventions or habits, Bernard Shaw suddenly brings to light the new, unexpected, shocking sight of what lay beneath; a vivid contrast is thus created between this apparition, or the very words with which it is expressed, and, on the other hand, the traditional image or description; the latter, which keeps at least a latent life in our minds, forces an instantaneous comparison upon us, producing a violent mental revulsion, which contains an implicit and so a humorous element. It would be an exaggeration to state, as Bernard Shaw has done, that his vision is abnormal only because it is true. It happens at times that by reversing the usual order of the factors, he throws light upon, not the fecundity of his initiative, but the wisdom of common sense, which has managed to register the most essential aspects of things. On the whole, however, he usefully renews and refreshes our notion of life and the world. Even when he irritates without convincing us, he makes our attachment to our own opinions better justified. He has been one of the most active leavening influences in the moral transformation of contemporary England.

Such is that drama, with which, no doubt, the boldness of a free mind has more to do than mere paradox, but which is itself certainly paradoxical. Those plays made up of mere dialogue are often fatiguing; they are rarely tedious; they have a particular life of their own. The justification of the personages most often consists in the part they play and the philosophy they embody; but many of them valiantly bear such a burden, and make themselves acceptable to our amused curiosity, if not to our intuition of what is possible, through the saving grace of their characteristic significance. Humour, and the gift of telling words, and the profound sense of the diversity of human opinions, are the salt which keeps this fragile literary kind fresh and living. The action, which Ibsen carefully built out of the resources of his powerful dramatic technique, is here simplified, wholly artificial, and sometimes non-existent. Such plays are as fit to be read as to be staged, and perhaps fitter. The author is aware of it; his stage directions have grown to unusual, to enormous lengths; substantial prefaces, more than once, have undertaken to point

out the meaning of the play, and thus made the play almost superfluous. There would hardly, in fact, be left anything that might justly be called dramatic, were it not that Bernard Shaw possesses a gift of imaginative invention, and an almost poetical fancy, which through symbolism lead one back to Romantic comedy and the Elizabethan drama. Many of his plays, in fact, have been, and still are, very successful on the stage; their success is their justification. After an initial period, in which his manner was, no doubt, too austere, and he exacted too heavy an effort from his audience, he has known how to spare their nerves, and temper his severe lessons with seductive displays of brilliancy, or with farcical admixtures.

As a playwright, he has passed the meridian of his career; but the development of his mind may still have surprises in store. Adapting Ibsen's problem-play, and Butler's thought, to his temperament of an intellectual stimulator, he has produced a strong and lasting work, and aroused the English stage, more efficiently than any other has done, from its century-old torpor.

So vast is the work of H. G. Wells,[1] that its various parts

[1] Herbert George Wells, born in 1868 at Bromley, Kent, came of a very modest ... draper's stores, then as a pupil teacher in ... a college of science where he followed the ... rsity of London degree, he gave lessons, ... laborated in reviews; his short stories on ... bile his novels have made him one of the most widely read among contemporary writers. To his first style belong such works as. *The Time Machine*, 1895, *The Island of Dr Moreau*, 1896; *The Invisible Man*, 1897; *The War of the Worlds*, 1898; *When the Sleeper Wakes*, 1899; *The First Men in the Moon*, 1901; *The Food of the Gods*, 1904; *In the Days of the Comet*, 1906; *The War in the Air*, 1908 (published in various forms). A socialist, he originally belonged to the Fabian group, but broke away from it; he wrote for it a tract, *This Misery of Boots*, 1907, as well as works of propaganda· *Socialism and Marriage*; *New Worlds for Old*, 1908. At the same time he collected his studies in imaginative sociology: *Anticipations, etc*, 1901; *Mankind in the Making*, 1903; *A Modern Utopia*, 1905; *The Future in America*, 1906; *An Englishman* *Loo*... his ... *Les*... *of* ... *Fri*... *Th*... *fou*... infl... *It*... *Per*... *lik*. ... *of* ... 192...

must be classified. He has written short stories and tales founded on the particular species of the marvellous which modern science can suggest. From biology and applied mechanics, he passed on to the problems of the future of man; a socialist and sociologist, he has lived for a quarter of a century in a daily intercourse of the mind with the efforts, the disappointments, the hopes, of the search for a better life extended to all. This energy of social reflection is the soul of his novels, in which the critical analysis of what is mingles with the study of what should or might be; in which a passionate feeling of the collective drama that man is enacting on the earth, quickened by personal motives, stimulates and guides his imagination. The novel thus becomes a confession of evil in all its forms, and an ample discussion of its remedies; it develops at the same time towards international politics, as the solidarity of peoples and the supremacy of public opinion are already adumbrating them; and towards religious philosophy, the free examination of supreme questions and last issues. Already on the eve of the war, and chiefly during and after it, the thought of H. G. Wells has taken a definite bent in this direction. He figures at the present day as a spiritual guide of suffering humanity, the adviser of nations blinded by their hostilities, of individuals whom their selfishness is making unconscious. While science, its facts, its methods, have not vanished from the background of his mind, he has taken his stand with Carlyle and Ruskin in the exercise of a half-mystical apostolate.

But if he takes up that tradition again, he modifies it very deeply. His intellectual formation belonged to a new type—or one, at least, whose influence had hardly yet been felt in literature. The predominant spirit of the surroundings has not, through the subtle working of education and atmosphere, attenuated the vigour of his democratic instincts; moreover, he has received from science his mental habits, his master intuitions, and classical culture has had no chance to shape his robust originality according to the traditional ideal of a resigned humanism. Hav-

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1918; *The Outline of History*, 1920; *The Salvaging of Civilization*, 1921; *A Year of Prophesying*, 1925; *Democracy Under Revision*, 1927; *The Open Conspiracy*, 1928; *The Way the World Is Going*, 1928, etc. See studies by Chevrillon (*Nouv. études anglaises*), 1910; J. D. Beresford (*H. G. Wells:* Writers of the Day), 1915; V. W. Brooks (*The World of H. G. Wells*), 1915; E. E. Slosson (*Six Major Prophets*), 1917; Ed. Guyot (*H. G. Wells*), 1921; R. T. Hopkins (*H. G. Wells, Personality, Character*, etc.), 1922; G. Connes (*La Pensée de H. G. Wells*), 1926.

ing reached the life of art through those independent ways, H. G. Wells possessed a revolutionary force in his unadulterated instincts. The writers who came like him from the lower-middle rank—as, for instance, Dickens—had accepted the superiority of the social system outside which they had been born; they had desired to enter it, were it only in order to broaden it, and introduce with them into it a more generous charity. H. G. Wells, on the contrary, sees and judges from the outside the hierarchy of classes, and all the conventions upon which it is based; he refuses to yield to the lure of a naturalisation in which a subjection is implied. So, nothing mitigates the cruel clear-sightedness of his eyes. The fictitious values still acknowledged by Carlyle or Ruskin—for example, the old notion of the "gentleman"—are to him, like all others, to be revised. Further, he brings to bear on moral questions, and on the problem of the order of which society is susceptible, the realism of a man used to the analysis of causes, full of the sense of the complexity inherent to vital reactions, but also of the power which the experimenter wields over them. In this way a technical angle of vision, the imaginative bents which a biologist will derive from the study of tissues, functions and organs, are at the root of the remarkable faculty of divination which has made H. G. Wells a precursor or an inventor on points scattered over the whole field of life. He has an intuitive feeling of the ways through which we can act according to the simpler will of brute matter, or the more entangled demands of organised bodies.

Even leaving out many temperamental shades, such is the source of the mental difference between Wells and Shaw. They meet on a plane of equally audacious criticism; in many respects, the general outlines of their solutions coincide; the common starting-point of both is Fabian socialism; originally, to both of them, intelligence is the single criterion of truth, of justice. But Bernard Shaw's education was more normal; he is more thoroughly submissive to the discipline of mathematical reason; he sees problems from the point of view of logic. Wells is under the ascendancy of concrete perception; not that which supports the elementary and passive kind of empiricism, but that of a superior empiricism, which will proceed to investigations, and take initiatives in the presence of facts. So there is in Wells's thought more elasticity, a greater power of self-renovation; it has

remained more broadly in touch with reality. He is thus led to test in himself the very instruments of knowledge; to establish modest conclusions upon an attentive and shrewd psychological analysis; and thus it is that his philosophical confession, *First and Last Things*, breathes a rationalism so curiously tempered by pragmatic avowals. His perception of the concrete is doubtlessly also the cause of the very marked intellectual evolution which has made him more and more keenly alive to the incalculable elements in human life—passions, desires, impulses; to the gleams of beauty, to the secret and powerful activities of idealism; and which has made him a prophet.

The very cause, however, which broadens Wells's thought and makes it more supple, must be acknowledged to narrow its scope in some respects. This thought feeds on experience; but experience is individual; generalisation, and the sense of broader issues, should be constantly at work, in order to counteract its essential relativity. It is obvious that Wells has not always succeeded in escaping this danger. His feeling of all problems is stimulated by a quivering personality; but it is also agitated, disturbed, on occasion warped by it. His critical or constructive endeavour will be strictly controlled at times by his grievances or his passions, not in so far as they are human, but in so far as they are accidental.

Impulsive as it is, and diversified by an inner movement which has not yet allowed it to find a resting-place, his thought is none the less one of the most substantial in contemporary Europe; it is the centre of his work, and imparts to it a radiating virtue of fecundity. Through it, more efficiently than through any other, the wider Anglo-Saxon public has been initiated in the intense moral disturbance of an unsettled age. It is to it that the writer and the artist mostly owe their appeal and their value.

Bernard Shaw's satirical study of English society was like the demonstration of a series of theses, which, according to a simple and almost mechanical device, reversed the usual order of certain terms. That of Wells rather reminds one of an anatomical dissection; it reveals to us the depth and inner condition of tissues. This is why it is so instructive; it does not separate, but on the contrary, unites facts and souls, the material and the moral elements of the social organisation. It aims at tracing their concatenation, from the dim region where economic forces, silent and

all-powerful traditions, implicit instincts, are interwoven in the very woof of the established order, to the superior plane where in full light are displayed the public relationships of the classes, official feelings, political ideas and formulæ. What a Balzac and a Zola had done in France, Wells does again in England; with less genius than one or the other, a grasp of the psychology of individuals less strong and safe than that of the first, an intuition of group psychology less vigorous than that of the second, but with a sociological sense more precise than that of either. Such a study as that which we find in *Tono-Bungay* of the structure of English society, with its two poles, the agricultural, hierarchical and superannuated civilisation of the "Bladesover system," and on the other hand the swarming world of commerce, advertising and money, is a broad general picture of rare power, in which the lights are distributed by the artist with an accuracy that a scientist might envy.

The remedy for a universal disorder of which he has given two more striking sketches, taken from the life at a few years' interval, in *The New Machiavelli* and *Joan and Peter*, has been proposed by H. G. Wells most unambiguously. It is organising socialism, in a form free, but less mixed than that of Bernard Shaw (*New Worlds for Old*, etc.). But it is most often in connection with particular problems, and from a special point of view, that social anarchy is considered. A large part of his work as a novelist deals with the conflict between irresponsible passion, on the one hand, and, on the other, the necessity for some regulation of love, or the summary decrees of morality and of law; an already well-worn subject, which Wells treats with a frankness that oversteps the bounds of Victorian respectability, but without all the delicacy of touch which such an analysis would require. *Ann Veronica* studies the emancipated girl, confronted with freedom and its snares, and the choice of a companion. *The New Machiavelli* portrays the struggle between political ambition and love, on the background of worldly pharisaism. *Marriage, The Passionate Friends,* play variations on the same theme. Here, Wells does not reach a positive conclusion; he shows the facts as they are, difficult and painful, and sees no infallible solution. While Bernard Shaw demanded an unlimited extension of the facilities for divorce, he sets a very definite limit, in the interests of the race, to the fragility of unions.

The movement of his thought has ceaselessly progressed towards a more idealistic notion of the conditions of collective health. The Fabian in Wells has grown disenchanted as to a programme which he now deems bureaucratic, and has turned to a more inward theory of social reform. The actuality of a people's civilisation, at a given time, is in its ideas and manners; to reconstruct a nation is to re-create the spirit of its public life. Already *Anticipations, Mankind in the Making,* had studied the development of man in its functional relation to a single predominant factor, science. Organised knowledge still remains in the eyes of Wells the great hope of mankind; the world, he believes, will assume a different aspect, as soon as the elementary connection between causes and effects in nature and life is more accurately perceived by all. The future of humanity, and more particularly that of Great Britain, is bound up with the problem of education. *Joan and Peter* grapples with the subject; and forcibly, in a raw light, under a simplified but not misleading perspective, points out the routine-loving empiricism of the present, and what might be substituted for it.

But science and ideas are neither the only motive-powers of the soul, nor the most powerful. Already before the war there were seen in Wells signs of an increasing attention to the claims of feeling—from love and passion, which are the making and undoing of individual destinies, through those moving intuitions which the philosopher acknowledged *(First and Last Things),* those sudden apparitions of beauty, those flashes of a light which the artist pronounced to be mysterious and unearthly, even to religious emotions properly so called. The shock of the war has caused that budding mysticism to bloom. Socialism no longer stands in the foreground of Wells's thought. His political theses are dominated by the ardour and anguish of a high certitude, that of human unity in the making. This faith interprets and unifies the history of the world *(The Outline of History);* it opens the way to salvation for a Europe exhausted with violence, destruction and fear *(The Salvaging of Civilization).* Internationalism has become the necessary form of Wells's intelligence and vision. And from the earth that moans in carrying her load of tears through the skies, from the race of men in which the fires of reason, of duty, of love burn in spite of all, a common aspiration meanwhile rises, a thrill of nature which another thrill answers

in the abysm of space. The Divine exists; it is perceptible, and plain to our consciousness; it is aware of our call; it is not infinite, it is not almighty, but it tends towards a more complete personality, to the realisation of which all beings co-operate. Reconciled mankind will be one of the centres in which will burn with increased energy that deathless flame with which it is already glowing; a flame whose cosmic radiance, meanwhile, lights, attracts and guides it (*Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, *The Undying Fire*, etc.).

Theology is a dangerous subject. Unbelievers have reproached Wells with having touched it; believers, with touching it otherwise than they themselves did. The fact is that his thought is somewhat interfering. Possessed as it is by an impatience to understand and to express itself, it knows no limits to its ambition, no check upon its daring attempts. But a sincere and truly religious intellectual humility is at the core of this seeming presumption. Wells's mysticism gives the finishing touch to his personality; and such an inspiration, while dangerous to artistic balance, has not always been harmful to an already over-excitable artist. *The Undying Fire* has a concentration, a definiteness of outline which he had but rarely reached.

The writer, indeed, is very unequal. The fanciful tales of the first period are now considered by the author himself as unpretending efforts. They possess, however, merits of their own. Written in a simple and straightforward manner, with a natural sense of style, they serve their purpose very well. They illustrate also the spontaneous movements of an imagination which takes a curious pleasure in modifying one term, beyond the range of its normal or possible value, in the formulæ of biology and mechanics, with a view to studying its reaction upon the whole system; just as the philosopher at a later date will dream of a human order in which the progress of science will transform the equation of happiness. The works of pure sociology are among the most solid of his writings; in them the taking interest of the matter is set off by a sober animation, or an emotion that emphasises the thought without dimming its clearness. When we come to the novels, we find more ambitious artistic aims; higher effects indeed appear, as well as more visible failings.

Among such works *Kipps* and *Tono-Bungay* are probably the

best. These books are instinct with a single central impulse which carries them to their conclusions; the action in them, without being condensed beyond the probabilities of life, has a substantial unity. They have been conceived and realised by an intellectual ardour and by a verve not unfit to be matched. In the other novels, the energy is fitful; there seem to occur breaks in the continuity of the subject, of the plan, or of the writer's conviction; the development is liable to diffuseness and uncertainty. Through the whole of Wells's work, the value of the characters varies exceedingly, according to the fund of personal observation and subjective experience which enters into their substance; the category of beings he has best depicted is that which he had known in his childhood and youth, more or less directly about him; the obscure soul of a Kipps, the restless soul of a Ponderevo, contrasted with the magnificent assurance of his uncle; dyspeptic Mr. Polly, ambitious Remington, are of that order. Such striking figures are numerous enough to testify to a remarkable creative power, within its limits. The women and the girls are of inferior quality, and especially so whenever the psychology endeavours to be fine, or to draw an intense image of love. The passions that live here are those of imagination and the head, not those of the heart. The picture of surroundings, powerful in the analysis of social interrelations, is valuable when it deals with masses, and sketches a whole civilisation, an historical moment, painted with a broad touch of the brush. When it is a question of describing more precise social circles, the author shows a familiar acquaintance only with the middle and lower-middle classes; in this field, indeed, his canvases are full, racy, and we feel that they are like. Here again, the humour is natural, easy, and genial enough, though not of a very rare quality.

The calm and quietly evocative style of the early books has grown more feverish; it is now loaded with ardour, intentions, and a kind of impressionism which reveals a richer vision, a more extensive command of language, the anguish of the inexpressible, and also the frequent interruption of the current of attention. The concrete and varied colouring of many episodes in the realistic novels (*Kipps*, *Tono-Bungay*, etc.) is too often missing at a later date, being replaced by a heated abstraction which is neither quite argument nor quite poetry. Still, the central vigour of the thought, and the sincerity of an exaltation which unceas-

ingly rises with eager broken flights, impart a saving virtue to this style, in spite of an excessive, almost morbid strain, and the cinema-like blinking manner of *Mr. Britling* and most of the recent novels; a virtue of impelling force, a glow of intellectual emotion, an imperfect and suffering beauty, like the very genius of a writer who ever struggles with irritating fatalities of temper, condoned by an ultimate nobility of aim.

With Wells, socialism comes into wide contact with life; it tends to comprehend it all, and for this very reason loses sight of the simplicity of formulæ. An attractive personality more *fully represents this realisation of an ideal, in so far as it is open* to an individual to practise it. Edward Carpenter[1] has felt influences: that of Ruskin, that of Whitman, that of Hindu mysticism; but the central decisions of his personality are his own. A poet, an æsthetician, a moralist, a psychologist, he has displayed in several fields an original talent, too exclusively occupied with a gospel of universal brotherhood to give to expression the rigorous care without which there can be no perfection; inspired, however, and able to invest a high enthusiasm with taking images and rhythms. His philosophy, all looking out towards the future, has examined the most delicate problems of spiritual civilisation with intuitive healthy audacity. His seduction as a literary figure lies in his generous humanity, the harbinger of new times, in which, through his heart and his thought, he already lives.

To be consulted: C. Cestre, *Bernard Shaw*, 1912; F. W. Chandler, *Aspects of Modern Drama*, 1916, Abel Chevalley, *Le Roman anglais de notre temps*, 1921; A. Chevrillon, *Trois études de littérature anglaise*, 1921; G. Connes, *La Pensée de H. G. Wells*, 1926; J. W. Cunliffe, *English Literature During the Last Half-Century*, 1920; E. Guyot, *Le Socialisme et l'évolution de l'Angleterre contemporaine*, 1913; idem, *H. G. Wells*, 1920; A Henderson, *European Dramatists*, 1913, J. M. Manly and E. Rickert, *Contemporary British Literature*, 1922; W. L. Phelps, *The Advance of the English Novel*, 1916; idem, *Essays on Modern Dramatists*, 1921; F. Roz, *Le Roman anglais contemporain*, 1912; G. N. Shuster, *The Catholic Spirit in Modern English Literature*, 1922; H. Williams, *Modern English Writers*, 1920

[1] Edward Carpenter, born in 1844, studied at Cambridge, renounced a Church career, taught science, came into contact with the working-classes, adopted socialism, became a manual worker, and finally an agriculturist, at the same time as he wrote poems: *Narcissus*, etc., 1873; *Towards Democracy* (four parts), 1883-1902; ... religious studies: *The Ch*... *The Art of Creation*, *Re*... etc ...s in social and moral psy... *Cause and Cure*, 1889; *Lo*... c., 1908; *The Healing of*... *ams*, 1916. See studies by ... an, 1922.

CHAPTER V

CONTEMPORARY TENDENCIES

1. *Literary Individualism.*—It is a commonplace remark that, as it draws nearer to the present, the precise study of a given literature meets with increasing difficulties. Perspective is lacking; works fit to last cannot be distinguished yet from ephemeral successes; the action of time has not, through the accumulated effect of successive judgments, brought out that average standard of appreciation which assigns to writers and books, within a narrow margin, their proper categories and their just ranks. The figure of each author has not revealed all its aspects; the characteristic features have not stood out in full relief.

More difficult still than the valuation of merits is the ordering of groups. An inner principle of classification can no longer be put into practice. The personality of each writer remains closed up; his own reserve, and a scruple of delicacy in his readers, prevent the latter from invading those recesses by force. The implicit confessions to be found in books need being explained and completed. Few are the authors who enlighten us as to themselves; and what they say is not, as a rule, what we should most like to know. The biographer and the critic will enjoy their full freedom, and be able to use all their methods of investigation, only when the man they deal with is no longer. We know less of the living than of the dead.

It is thus impossible to group the English writers of the present time according to their psychological affinities. The division into literary kinds is the only practicable order. A rapid survey will be here attempted of the novel, the drama, and poetry.

Never were these categories more external. Never did the personality of each writer count for more, as compared with the general form of his expression. And never did temperaments more forcibly refuse to comply with a common style, one method, one programme. It has often been noticed that the

era of literary doctrines and schools seems to be over. The twentieth century in Great Britain bears the same parcelled-out aspect as in France. In spite of the effort towards unity which was represented by the doctrines of action, the variety of tendencies, on the eve of the war, was unlimited. The future will tell whether the new period, which English literature may be now entering, is to witness a reappearance of simple lines and of an accepted discipline; and whether the predominantly intellectual age which seems to be called for by the law of moral rhythm, is to put an end by means of a strong synthesis to a phase of diverging instincts.

In order that this should be the case, it would be necessary that the moral and social changes caused by the war should deeply renovate the inner sources of art and thought. For the literary individualism of the present day is no superficial fact; it springs from a development of long standing; it is brought about by the very advance of psychological complexity, and by the subconscious persistence of the past in the present.

The wiser course is to admit that Nature does not nowadays produce a larger number of original temperaments; but each one's originality knows better how to show to advantage; it knows better how to define itself. Every mind finds the elements of such a definition ready made. It possesses the necessary means of comparison in its inner treasure of latent memories. The number and the diversity of the tendencies which each individual carries in himself, because of psychological heredity, now broaden the margin of variation in which personal differences can find place, and favour the clear perception of these differences. For the memory of the race has not only kept records of the past phases of development; it has preserved some trace, as well, of the æsthetic judgments which respectively answered to each of those phases; it dimly revives, in every consciousness, the series of the earlier preferences of taste. Here is felt the influence of culture, the more developed and widely diffused as a people's civilisation is further advanced. Education turns into a clear notion the obscure intuition, previously owned by each individual being, of the main artistic types that have been successively realised, and of the corresponding attitudes of sensibility. Thus it is that modern writers will reach the age of literary creation with a definite idea both of what they want to create, and of the par-

ticular place of their temperaments in the whole range of possibilities; with a critical vocabulary and a programme within reach. The history of the national letters and of other literatures has familiarised them from an early age with the principal species of æsthetic doctrines. It has become so easy and so natural a thing to express one's own originality to one's self, and to draw up a programme, that all beginners are, or want to be, original; all are leaders of some school or other; the result is that there is no longer any real school. What used to be the connecting bond and the strength of groups—the unconsciousness of one's self and of a long past, the ignoring of the numberless diversities which psychological evolution has deposited in souls—now does not exist; so that minds deprived of that antiquated ignorance can no longer unite, or believe that they unite, in the simple worship of the same forms of beauty.

Individualism in literature is thus a truth; it is in harmony with inner reality. But while it is fruitful in a way, as everything sincere is, it does not necessarily bespeak an over-abundance of original faculties. To all appearances, on the contrary, genuine originality has to-day become more difficult. So numerous are now the traces which the previous stages of moral development, and especially the literary phases, have left in the memory of the group, and consequently in the individual also, that the complexity of instincts begins to make it almost impossible for a writer to feel he is tapping untouched resources, which is equivalent to saying that it is almost impossible for him to possess them. Each reaction no longer revives the full joy of novelty; it rather awakes the impression of a thing seen before. The periods of the inner rhythm henceforth interpenetrate and contain one another; they cannot succeed in forgetting one another. The point of saturation seems reached. The attempts of artistic sensibility to create something new carry within themselves the dim but perceptible memory of similar efforts already attempted; and they are intuitively aware that the visible difference between the endeavour of the day before yesterday and that of to-day, is precisely due to the persistent influence of that very mood of yesterday, from which consciousness is trying to escape. Thenceforward the way is hardly open to a renewing of literary inspiration through those vast movements of the soul, to which the minds of a whole generation rally with the enthusiasm and the pleasure of self-

discovery. Programmes then, if wide, are necessarily commonplace; and if precise, must include so many particular features that they become exaggeratedly individual in character.

This is the case, at least, in what concerns the stable, influential, and most cultivated classes of society. As for those whose culture is still incomplete, they show more elasticity. The education of taste has a double effect: on the one hand, it makes the exercise of inborn faculties more easy; it develops talents, strengthens and improves their expression; it thus adds materially to their number. On the other hand, by stimulating in each mind the consciousness of itself, and chiefly the knowledge of the national past, it intensifies the working of elementary psychological memory, and tends to make the eager innovating initiatives of genius more rare. The contemporary period, during which, in England, as elsewhere, education has become widely diffused, witnesses the birth of literary talents in greater abundance than ever before. The universities have given rise to a whole swarm of poets. Creative gifts, however, are not more frequent; and they seem to reveal themselves preferably outside the circles most permeated with scholarly culture. Some independence, a certain irregularity, even gaps, in the formation of a mind and the instruction of its taste, seem to foster the growth in it of virgin instincts, and of a superior originality. There had always been erratic geniuses; but this remark would imply that their number was on the increase. In fact, the most generally known English writers of the present day—except Galsworthy—would confirm these views. Neither Hardy, nor Kipling, nor Wells, nor Conrad, nor Bennett, nor Shaw, has felt, in the proper sense, the influence of the universities.

It thus would seem as if the literary individualism of the present time were deeply connected with the multiplicity of talents, and with the divorce between normal culture and genius; while the causes of these two facts might be found in the growing moral senescence which is made inevitable by a prolonged psychological evolution. On the threshold of an era which endeavours to be new, it would thus be necessary to regard a stagnation, brought about by the wearing out of the inner spring which produces renewals, as a consequence difficult to escape; and one would have to expect a genuine renewing only from a substantial addition of fresh energy, the origin of which might be

either in vast moral and social changes, or in the broadening of consciousness to the full extent of the Empire or of all mankind. But the very problem of spiritual nationalities, and of their adaptation to a different civilisation, is thus raised. English literature, in spite of some symptoms, does not yet seem to have solved it—neither has it been solved by any other.

2. *The Novel.*—The novel remains in England an instrument of expression of unlimited elasticity. It is chosen by the most diverse temperaments; and serves to explain all theses, to register the most varied experiences. It constitutes by itself two-thirds of original literary production.

Among the contemporary novelists, some figures stand out prominently: those of writers who reached their full reputation only when the nineteenth century was over, but who belong to a pre-war generation. Others, younger and according to appearances less considerable, still have an unknown quantity in themselves; they represent the future in the making.

Joseph Conrad[1] is the most eminent symptom of what the new literary cosmopolitanism of the twentieth century might become—if this vein is destined to grow broader. No one before him had so definitely broken the tight link which binds the artistic handling of a given tongue to the exclusive possession of an intellectual nationality. The language of his childhood and youth is Polish; it remains that of his inner speech, except in moments of literary labour, when French steps into its place. He has been strongly influenced by the literature of France, and his technique is derived from that which was taught by our realists. English, first studied in books, then fully adopted by his mature

[1] Teodor Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski, born in Ukraine in 1856, came of a family of exiles and of Polish nationality, studied at Cracow; on the eve of his entering the University, he felt the irresistible call of the sea. He voyaged for twenty years, first as a sailor, then as a captain in the British merchant marine. Naturalised English in 1884, he published in 1895 a novel under the name of Joseph Conrad, *Almayer's Folly*, the success of which decided his life. Married and settled in England, he wrote novels or short stories: *An Outcast of the Islands*, 1896; *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, 1898; *Tales of Unrest*, 1898; *The Inheritors*, 1901; *Youth*, 1902; *Typhoon*, 1903; *Romance*, 1903; *Nostromo*, 1904; *Lord Jim*, 1906; *The Secret Agent*, 1907; *A Set of Six*, 1908; *Under Western Eyes*, 1911; *'Twixt Land and Sea*, 1912; *Chance*, 1914; *Within the Tides*, 1915; *Victory*, 1915; *The Shadow-Line*, 1917; *The Arrow of Gold*, 1919; *Tales of the Sea*, 1919; *The Rescue*, 1920; autobiographical works: *The Mirror of the Sea*, 1906; *Some Reminiscences*, 1912; *Notes on Life and Letters*, 1921; critical articles, etc. He died in 1924. See the studies by R. Curle (*Joseph Conrad*), 1914; Hugh Walpole (*Joseph Conrad*), 1916; E. Bendz (*Joseph Conrad, an Appreciation*), 1923; G. Jean-Aubry (*J. C., Life and Letters*), 1927.

personality, is the *instrument of expression which his* art employs in the process of explicit realisation.

And yet, thanks to an exceptional gift of assimilation, this instrument has the *most extensive range. Joseph Conrad's* vocabulary shows all the concrete wealth of the Anglo-Saxon stock; he displays, in some fields at least, a rare virtuosity in the use of technical *terms; his knowledge of the things and words* of the sea—with which he is most intimately familiar—exceeds that of Kipling. He knows, at need, how to seek effects in the ample dignity of Latin vocables. So *glowing, luxuriant and* habitual is this delight in words, that it reveals, through its very development, a conscious apprenticeship of language, a possession clear and actual in all its parts; that abnormal something, to which, on English soil, the expert and complacent handling of linguistic resources seems to point. In fact, Joseph Conrad's prose style, at least during the early part of his career, would leave upon British ears an impression of slightly exaggerated sonorousness and rhythm.

His art is the most composite product. However essential may be the element of original initiative in his development, the form which he took up, either from instinctive choice or because he had experienced its appeal, had been created by others: it is the novel of adventure, as Stevenson and already Kipling were illustrating its new possibilities; and he combines with it the objective spirit of French naturalism. The movement and the method of his psychology, the attention he pays to the various points of view which cross and recross one another round each being, owe something to Henry James. Even a background of Slav sensibility, and the spirit of Russian novelists, are betrayed in the special quality of his perception of the mysterious, and in his philosophy of life.

This complex of influences is dominated by a temperament which turns it into a brilliant, rich and original alloy. Joseph Conrad is quite conscious of his manner; he has given a theory of it. This is the direct echo of his inevitable preferences; but one feels that it is encouraged as well by the doctrines of Maupassant and Flaubert. Art is self-sufficient; the artist has no object but to *fully transmit the impression of reality;* and the senses are the best, or rather the only, way open to this expression. Therefore the novelist must draw from all the resources of the

arts, whether of colour and shape or of sound; his work should have the bright hues of painting, the solidity of sculpture, the rhythm and harmony of music. He has fulfilled this programme to the letter; not with painstaking accuracy, but with the sovereign ease of a talent which when obeying rules is but following its own instinct. The wealth, the vigour and the glow of his descriptions are second to none in literature. The scenes which he calls up are very varied; but their succession naturally finds a centre in the image of the sea; it is from the deck of a ship that we witness the unrolling of the sights of the world; the smiles and furies of the ocean, the dramas of sailing, distant shores, the landscapes and manners of Oceania, of Asia, of America, and of those English seaports whither the liners find their way back, make up an intensely vivid show which forces itself upon our glance like a striking, almost haunting scenery. The registering of lights, sounds, odours and tastes is with Joseph Conrad's characters a constant, automatic activity, which none of the emotions of life can interrupt. The artist who has fixed so many sensations, and found the most fitting words to express them, has contributed, along with Kipling, to broaden the descriptive range of the English language.

The inner world is no less a reality to Joseph Conrad. He does not, however, explore it with the same spontaneity; some effort in this field, if not some artifice, can be felt. On the one hand, his invention creates figures with firm outlines, whose moral beings, quite as much as their features, seize us with a sure conviction of their elementary truth. On the other, his psychological curiosity gives itself scope in slow ruminations, in analyses of dim souls, in complicated and subtle studies, where, no doubt, his intuitive sense of life still stands him in good stead, but where his perception is neither so definite nor so new as when confronted with the material universe. His desire for objectivity has often led him to present the facts of his plots as reflected in one or several minds, the visions of which the reader is to follow and harmonise; and this method gives rise to some uncertainty, as it does to high and rare effects.

A violent, at times a raw realist, Joseph Conrad is also a thinker and a poet. While he does not set as an end to his art the search for ideas, which he regards as the proper object of the philosopher, he has allowed the emotions of an intelligence which

does not refuse itself the human privilege of feeling, to come out in half-tones through his work. Humour and pathos are to be found in his novels; and chiefly, an ever-present sense of the mystery of fate, and an implicit, diffused, profound ethical element. The mood of his thought is pessimistic; almost all his books lay stress on the numberless varieties of suffering. He has no idealised hero; the weakness of nature everywhere asserts itself. In spite of the endeavours of the best, themselves fallible, ineradicable selfishness turns man into a wolf to man. The son of political exiles, the child of a nationality and a race long persecuted, reveals himself in the pressing suggestion of union, pity and solidarity which emanates from his work. This appeal lends it a glow of sympathy, and raises it above the level of fiction pure and simple. But its most contagious idealism lies in the tragic or dreamy sense of the unfathomable unknown which we brush past at every moment; in that mystic spiritualisation of the face of life or that of earth, which suddenly casts a glamour of poetry over the outlines of the action or the landscape. To the influences which Joseph Conrad has felt, one more, that of Symbolism, is to be added; or rather, his temperament found itself naturally attuned to this note as it was to others.

He is not popular, in spite of the very high esteem in which he is held by the connoisseurs, because of the harsh flavour of his work, foreign and European, careless of some conventions of the average English taste. He is doubtlessly not one of the great creative geniuses; but his personality is of the first order; he has, through a sheer miracle, wrought ill-assorted elements into a strong synthesis; he has, in a learnt language, fashioned an irresistible style, loaded with the nervous impact of stern realities, carried onward by a rhythm which not only multiplies their hard rigour, but bathes it in a meditative music through which the soul catches an undertone of softer harmonies.

Arnold Bennett[1] has written much; but the highest interest

[1] Arnold Bennett, born in 1867, near Hanley, in the "potteries" (Staffordshire), the son of a solicitor, developed by degrees into a journalist and critic, edited a magazine for women, his first novel, *A Man from the North*, appeared in 1898; [illegible] literature; resided in France from 1900 to 1908, [illegible] would lie [illegible] vened, full [illegible] gave him [illegible] els: *Clay-* [illegible] renew his [illegible], etc. His

and probably the permanent value of his work are concentrated in a definitely limited group of novels and short stories. The rest—drama, journalism, criticism, and even the studies of manners bearing on other subjects—is of secondary importance. He owes his place in literature to his pictures of provincial life.

Though unaware, in this field, of any conscious imitation, he takes up a tradition, that of minute, and at the same time broad and healthy realism, dwelling with indulgence upon the portraits of mediocre beings; his line is that of Dickens and George Eliot. No other is more English; and nothing is more national than the matter to which Arnold Bennett applies this method. Neither Dickens, whose social perspective is older by a whole century, nor George Eliot, who described a different world, had touched upon it before him. It is a drab and dull-looking mass of human beings, who swarm under the smoky skies of the industrial districts. Almost a parasitic growth, at first, in the body of the nation, it has become one of its essential and typical tissues. Among all industries, that of the "potteries" is one of the most cheerless because of the total absence of that romantic setting, whether fiery or grimly dark, which constitutes the poetry of iron or mining works. In these circles, where the average features of the race have been able to develop freely, escaping any intense or differentiated aspect, Arnold Bennett does not devote his attention to the industrial working man, who already is invested with associations of pitying or disquieted curiosity; but to a lower middle class of shopkeepers, clerks, professional people, whose characters are set off by no specially striking trait of any kind; a numerous class, shading off into a vast population, spread over the whole land, and owing its distinctive quality only to the local influences of the sky and the soil, as well as to the imperious will of the powerful industry on which, directly or indirectly, the district lives; a modern, neutral and prosaic subject-matter, if there ever was any.

Arnold Bennett's originality does not all reside in this choice.

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writings, as diverse as they are unequal, comprise, with all kinds of secondary work, short tales: *Tales of the Five Towns*, 1905; *The Grim Smile of the Five Towns*, 1907; *The Matador of the Five Towns*, 1912; plays: *Milestones*, 1912; *The Great Adventure*, 1913, etc.; books of autobiographical or critical interest: *The Truth About an Author*, 1903; *How to Become an Author*, 1903; *Things That Have Interested Me*, 1921, 1923, 1925. See the study by F. J. H. Darton (Writers of the Day), 1915; Mrs. A. Bennett, *Arnold Bennett*, 1925.

As compared with his predecessors, he is himself more modern, more conscious; he wishes to be freed from the influences which, in the novels of Dickens and George Eliot, interfere with the objectivity of the artist. He has breathed the atmosphere of another age; and his youth has felt the spell of foreign masters, who have enlightened his instinct. In the works of the brothers Goncourt, of Maupassant, he has found the model of a naturalism which effaces the writer's preferences behind the object; in those of Turgenev, he has found a pity which will have nothing to do with sentimentalism; while not resembling them, he succeeds to a fairly large extent in following them. To the most English of themes, he thus brings a technique sincere, but permeated with European lessons. In so far as the artistic faultlessness he aims at leaves room for a personal reaction, Arnold Bennett allows us to feel in him a contained half-pessimism, limited by the strong sense of duty, directed towards effort, soothed as well by the security which radiates from his very subject, from human groups in which moral responsibility is firm and safe. For Arnold Bennett, in spite of all, carries in his inmost fibres the preoccupation of conduct.

The Old Wives' Tale, the trilogy of *Clayhanger*, *Hilda Lessways*, and *These Twain*, make up a central fresco round which other tales—novels or short stories—group themselves. In spite of certain differences, a lighter touch and also a less abundant wealth in the other books of the series than in the first, they are all stamped with the unity of an artistic method. Its process is a number of minute touches, laid side by side and close together, answering to a truth which is self-sufficient, and does not aim at anything beyond itself. Effects of amplitude, of power, even of beauty, rise in the long run from their accumulated mass. Each scene, considered separately, is shown under a precise and somewhat cold light, in spite of the humour; and this picture of reality seems to be guided by the same ideal as that of photography. But life springs from the movement which educes one scene out of another; the mental image of an active social influence, with innumerable, subtle or tangible aspects, is built out of all the pressures through which circumstances, material and moral forces, shape the destinies that are being told us. And these destinies have in them the particular logic of likelihood; they impress us with the feeling of a kind of fatality, rooted in

the temperament of each being, developing with a flexible determinism, which is crossed with incidents and crises, and at every moment leaves some margin to freedom. Arnold Bennett is not a professed analyst; but he has created characters; his intuition of some souls penetrates them and seizes them with a vigorous hold.

These creations are neither very many nor very diverse. The special field of his psychology is that provincial lower middle class in which refinement is unknown, intelligence is simple, and complexity is restricted to feelings. Competent judges acknowledge a local truth in his most carefully studied portraits; it is said that the characters which he has best known how to vitalise fit in inseparably with the setting in which he has placed them. They wear indeed a family look. Their truth, however, exceeds the limits of that circle of the "Five Towns," in which their lives are so narrowly cooped up; from which they escape only to come back to it; and whose simple artlessness they preserve, even in the pathos to which they sometimes rise. Their humanity broadens their significance; in them the common basis of a whole class and a whole people is visible. A cosmopolitan in some of his tastes, but resolutely English in his essential preferences, Arnold Bennett does not hide it that his moral judgment accepts those narrow lives, with their Philistine ignorance, their prejudices, their honesty and unconscious heroism, just as his art finds in them a racy matter for humour, mockery, dramatic emotion.

Arnold Bennett's work has limits, and these obvious enough. The minute slowness of the method implies some heaviness; in its self-command, it still leaves too much room for explicit effects; there is nothing here like Maupassant's concentration. Perfectly adapted to the subject-matter, this art submits to its laws, and somewhat shares in its quality; it does not satisfy the finest demands of taste; it leaves the highest activities of mind outside its devices and its effects. Those novels are poor in poetry, in imaginative intensity, in variety of shades, in philosophical originality. Careless of most problems, they impoverish a reality which is, in fact, saturated with what they leave out. On the other hand, they rest upon a solid foundation; their harmony with a certain national and human nature, with some fundamental needs of our instinct of truth, imparts to them the character of what may last.

John Galsworthy [1] belongs to the same generation as Arnold Bennett. But his more supple talent seems younger. Among the masters of the present day, he is one of those whose development may still have new features in store.

Born of equally typical English stock, and of a class more traditionally rooted to the soil, the country gentry, he yet has received as well a graft from abroad. His travels, his reading, have brought him very widely into contact with the thoughts, the manners, the letters of many peoples. France and Russia have had a share in the formation of his realism. But Nature had fitted him for the thorough assimilation of those influences. The sap of the English genius, which now will be more soft and now more rough, in him has fed the germ of a fine and generous sensibility; and while endowing him with that moral courage which is often the source of the idealism of the race, has fostered also a gift of delicate perception, a keen penetration of intelligence. More aristocratic than H. G. Wells, he has thus brought no less clear and no less bold a mind to the analysis of the social order; as representative of his own country as Arnold Bennett, he has more efficiently mingled the national instincts with the lessons of unashamed objectivity which English literature was receiving from the outside world.

His temperament is that of a complete artist, rounded off by the emotions of a noble heart and the disquietude of a courageous thought. The exceptional quality of his work is due to the width of this range. Each key, in itself, is not free from some analogy with tones already heard; but it rings with a very pure sound, and the whole scale has the mellowness of a delightfully original art. John Galsworthy's criticism moves on parallel lines to that intellectual endeavour whose example, set by Matthew Arnold, Meredith and Samuel Butler, is followed among the contempo-

[1] John Galsworthy, born in Surrey in 1867, of "gentry" stock, studied at Harrow and Oxford, was called to the Bar, travelled in Europe and throughout the world, and published novels and short stories: *From the Four Winds*, 1897; *Jocelyn*, 1898; *Villa Rubein*, 1900; *A Man of Devon*, 1901; *The Island Pharisees*, 1904; *The Man of Property*, 1906; *The Country House*, 1907; *A Commentary*, 1908; *Fraternity*, 1908; *A Motley*, 1910; *The Patrician*, 1911; *The Dark Flower*, 1913; *The Little Man*, 1915; *The Freelands*, 1915; *Beyond*, 1917; *Five Tales*, 1918, *A Saint's Progress*, 1919; *Tatterdemalion*, 1920; *In Chancery*, 1920; *To Let*, 1922; *The White Monkey*, 1924; *The Silver Spoon*, 1926; *Swan Song*, 1928; essays: *The Inn of Tranquillity*, 1912; *A Sheaf*, 2 vols., 1916-19. For his plays, see below, sect. 3. See the studies by Sheila Kaye-Smith (*John Galsworthy*), 1916; Phelps (*The Advance of the English Novel*), 1916; Chevrillon (*Trois études de littérature anglaise*), 1921.

raries by Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells; but he combines with it elements which are his own: a more thorough cosmopolitan detachment, the independence of a moral nature which looks without any prejudice at the prominent or subtle traits of the British character, and appreciates them with bold freedom; on the other hand, a fundamental moderation, in which one divines, not the need of compromise, but a many-sided perception of things; a tact of the mind which never lets itself go as far as system, exaggeration, paradox, and which tempers logic with common sense. The pity of John Galsworthy continues a thoroughly English tradition; it reminds one of Dickens, and of a whole century stirred by social compunction; it adds to that general background, to that philanthropy of so many tender souls, a more quick and intense, often painful thrill, which resembles that of the Russian novel, the glow of a fraternity in which the mysticism of the East seems to have infused its ardour, and which extends the love of life to all nature. However, this cult of sentiment is free from all sentimentality—or almost so. Almost always, the reserve of the man, the economy of the writer, check the expression of emotion short of the limit where it would lose the merit of sobriety; and almost always feeling is imbued, from within, with a consciousness of its relativity, which intellectualises it.

After tentative beginnings, the personality of John Galsworthy shows itself in *The Island Pharisees,* in which the two main directions of his work appear. The mental passivity, the lethargy of heart, and all the selfishness of a class, a nation, a tradition, which defend their integrity, in the name exclusively of their will to live, are seen through and through by a reflection which awakes. Stripped and reduced to essentials, this analysis of British society in the shortened perspective of a few figures and brief episodes, is of rare power, and of an extreme acuity, which the hesitations of a still unequal art make at times excessive. It is conducted in the interest of an uncompromising sincerity of mind, the example of which is in this case sought outside England. Again, the violent or narrow decrees by which that order is forced upon rebellious instincts, are denounced as a tyranny; the rights of passion, and the freedom of a spontaneous experience which redeems its risks through the gift of self, are contrasted with the rigid demands of utilitarian health; the impulses of the heart are

set against the policy of wisdom. In all its central and most typical part, the work of John Galsworthy develops this double antithesis.

He lends it more weight, more breadth, and also more demonstrative force, by investing it abundantly with concrete substance. *The Country House* analyses on a more detailed scale the little world which revolves round the traditional authority of the squire. *The Patrician* follows up the struggle between the individual and the caste to the circles of the aristocracy. *Fraternity* boldly

Freelands directs the study towards the special domain of the land problem; *The Dark Flower* and *Beyond* bring it back to that conflict of passion of which John Galsworthy never loses sight, and leaving out all precise theses, analyse the revolt of the fervid or multiple truth of feelings, against the calm and permanency which orthodox happiness requires.

In a society, however, founded upon money, property is the root of the outstanding oppositions of interests, feelings and ideas. A series of narratives gather round the fate of a family which symbolises the reign of the instinct of personal ownership. *The Forsyte Saga* ("The Man of Property," "In Chancery," "To Let," etc.) has the powerful range of those vast imaginative constructions in which the modern novel, giving itself the broader scope of several generations and varied plots, has encompassed the psychological and social complexity of life. The masters of the hour, the financiers, merged in the class of the landed gentry, and gathering round them all the old forces of conservation, are studied in those works as the most vigorous representatives of the present order. A self-interested discipline, in them and about them, violently represses the independent powers of human nature —love, art, dreams, youth, change; and this drama, which, while enacted in the recesses of the soul, preserves a supremely precise and evocative significance, sums up the deepest struggle of our time between material civilisation and moral truth.

Quite as much as those of H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy's novels are thus instinct with that social disquietude, the magnetism of which to-day attracts so many energies. But his thought, more

finely shaded, is less aggressive; it partakes rather of the artist's or the moralist's curiosity, than of the spirit and zeal of a cause. His familiar acquaintance with the circles he describes lends a more just and keen impartiality to his picture of the ruling classes. He has delineated the character of a Jolyon or a Soames Forsyte with a careful attention to the living humanity that hides under the most hardened crust of individual or family selfishness. His intelligence is too vividly aware of the danger that lurks in simple solutions, to bind itself to a doctrine. However, the suggestion which emanates from his writings is active, and often audacious; not only does he prompt us to a searching compassion for all mean lives, and the victims of their own weaknesses or of the hardness of the strong; but he unveils sores, and points out remedies; he has denounced unjust laws, a summary procedure, an unnecessarily cruel penal system; he has demanded a relaxing of the statutory bonds of marriage. Brought to bear on the unlimited ownership of land or capital, his analysis has dissolved its juridical, moral, practical foundation; there exists in him a broad socialism of feeling and reflection.

It is a token of the high worth of his art, that a faith implying a conflict of the will against things as they are, and tending, in some directions at least, to narrow sympathies, should have added a poignant accent to his interpretation of reality, without obscuring or warping any part of the image which he has drawn. The realism of John Galsworthy is of a delicate, and so to say scrupulous quality. His desire for justice is not infallible; but it is sincere, and will be acknowledged even by such as may charge the creator of the Forsytes with vigorous aversions. Instead of seeking objectivity in coldness, he finds it in the tenderness of conscience. He is thus able to react to things with the emotion, but for which the artist's picture cannot be true. All alive with sensibility, his technique is that of an impressionist. Nature, the human world, characters, appear to us in intermittent and partial visions, the acuity of which is dependent on their limited objects, the mind devoting itself entirely to a single aspect of ephemeral experience. The instinct of composition, however, is not lacking; under their fugacious discontinuity, those glimpses are connected by a very sure sense of logic and equilibrium. The fragments of scenery make up landscapes, the social impressions create surroundings, the gestures and words of the personages organise into

characters which develop but endure. This art is not even half-way to "imagism."

As a painter of the physical *universe and of the soul,* John Galsworthy is a poet. The gleams of sky, earth and water in which he bathes his tales have a tender, rapturous charm; an accuracy, and, at the same time, a fluidity of contours, which remind one of Oriental sketches, acutely distinct, and melting into light-grey mist. After so many observers, he has known how to render with personal touches the freshness of the English country-side, and the shimmering of a cloud-veiled light. His psychology is not methodical, painstaking; it has the freedom of *an intuitive talent;* it reveals the secret movement of the inner life as it perceives it, through flashes and divinings.

His studies of characters are very varied. Although there is a feminine fibre in his moral nature, it would be unfair not to recognise that he has created virile figures, with robust relief. It cannot be denied, however, that he has endued the portraits of women and girls with a happy grace, or that he has treated problems of feeling by organising them round passionate love as a centre. His heroines, ardent and spontaneous, do not show the brilliant intellectuality which Meredith has imparted to his own; and in spite of the exceptional penetration of his analyses, John Galsworthy has never aimed at the extreme complexity in which some psychologists find their crowning achievement. He is too *genuinely desirous of truth to lend an artificial intensity to the* stream of consciousness. In his eyes all human beings, even such as are most keenly tormented by the fevers of greed or desire, are intimately related to the animal and vegetable nature which on all sides surrounds them, and whose obscure sympathy is like an accompanying undertone to the theme of their destiny. His instinct is too much coloured with pantheism for him to absorb the world in man. Art to him is a spell which does not stimulate individuality, but dissolves it. His personages, however particularised, ever possess *something of the quality of a type.*

The action of his novels is at times slackened by a dreamy mood of contemplation which in its essence is philosophical and mystic, and seizes the illusory stirrings of the universal soul in the agitations of individual beings. The elasticity of the novel has not always proved to him a favourable influence; and the stricter form of the drama may have told upon his art as a

salutary constraint. Still, his technique shows a just sense of architecture; he knows how to construct a subject, distribute his masses, group his contrivances and effects. The interpretation of characters with him is rarely indirect, and dictated by the author to the reader; it spontaneously radiates from all the activities and attitudes through which the original being of each hero expresses itself. His style, eminently flexible, is readily adapted to very diverse functions; quivering, nervous, coloured in descriptions, vigorous and suggestive in the rendering of states of consciousness, it lends itself to widely different tones, and becomes in the language of every person the indispensable instrument of the very thought to which we are listening. Impassioned as it is, it can use irony with superior success.

Concentration agrees well with John Galsworthy's talent. His short stories and impressions—things seen and etched with a light sure hand—are of high value. He has written thoughtful essays, rich with æsthetic lucidity, upon dramatic art and the craft of literature.

Besides those masters, and other writers whom a less rapid survey would be bound not to pass over,[1] the contemporary

[1] At the end of the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth, the novel in England has been wonderfully productive. Among the authors whose merit or signal interest does not permit of their being passed over in silence, mention should be made of the following: Sir James Barrie, born in 1860; his Scottish novels describe with a spirit of tender and humorous realism the life of the lowland peasantry. He forms, with Ian Maclaren, G. Douglas, J. R. Crockett, the "Kailyard School" of writers: *A Window in Thrums*, 1889; *The Little Minister*, 1891; *Margaret Ogilvie*, 1896, etc.; see study by J. A. Hammerton; *Critical Estimate*, by Th. Moult, 1928; for his plays, see below.—John Davys Beresford, born in 1873, a realist: *The History of Jacob Stahl*, 1911; *A Candidate for Truth*, 1912; *The Invisible Event*, 1915; *These Lynnekers*, 1916, etc.—Sir Walter Besant (1836-1901), represents the social and historical novel: *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, 1882; *All in a Garden Fair*, 1883, etc.—Algernon Blackwood, born in 1869; the novelist of terror and of the supernatural: *The Centaur*, 1911; *A Prisoner in Fairyland*, 1913, etc.—Rhoda Broughton, born in 1840, a realist: *Dear Faustina*, 1897, etc.—Sir A. Conan Doyle, born in 1869; the historical novel and detective story: *Micah Clarke*, 1888; *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 1891, etc.—Sarah Grand, born in 1862, a realist and feminist: *A Domestic Experiment*, 1891; *Babs the Impossible*, 1900, etc.—Robert Hichens, born in 1864, a satirical and romantic writer: *The Green Carnation*, 1894; *The Garden of Allah*, 1905, etc.—Anthony Hope (Sir A. Hope Hawkins), born in 1863; adventure and social novel: *The Prisoner of Zenda*, 1894, etc.—W. H. Hudson (1846-1922), born in the Argentine; the novel of natural observation and imagination: *The Purple Land*, 1885; *Hampshire Days*, 1903; *Green Mansions*, 1904; *A Shepherd's Life*, 1910, etc.; see study by M. Roberts, 1924.—Lucas Malet (Mary St. Leger Harrison), born in 1852, the daughter of Charles Kingsley; a realist and feminist: *The History of Sir Richard Calmady*, 1901, etc.—W. H. Mallock, born in 1849; satirist and realist: *The New Republic*, 1877; *A Human Document*, 1892, etc.—Leonard Merrick, born in 1864; a realist: *The Actor-Manager*, 1898; *The Quaint Companions*, 1903, etc.—W. de Morgan, realist: *Joseph*

English novel shows a profusion of young talents. A study whose chronological limit is 1914 cannot give them the attention they deserve. On the eve of the war, they had hardly done more than to raise expectations. Their figures have since become more definite, without reaching yet full development. Their individual features cannot be sketched here. It is possible, on the other hand, to sum up the general tendencies which they betoken.[1]

The English novel of to-day remains the most supple artistic form; it is, indeed, more elastic than ever. For of the characteristics which it had assumed during the preceding years, the larger number have not ceased to be prominent: a more objective realism, an outspoken frankness in the description of passion, a bold social criticism, the free discussion of all problems. It thus draws its matter from the most diverse sources. But besides, the ideal of a more firm construction, towards which the age of Hardy had striven in the light of the French example, seems to have been

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Vance, 1906, etc.—Arthur Morrison, realistic and social novel: *Tales of Mean Streets*, 189[illegible] *A Child of the Jago* 1896 etc—Eden Phillpotts, born in 1862, the [illegible] 1896; *Children of the Mist*, 1898; [illegible] ouch, born in 1863, the "regional- [illegible] *indow*, 1906, etc.—Olive Schreiner [illegible] *e Story of an African Farm*, 1883, [illegible] l writer. *No. 5 John Street*, 1899. [illegible] *e Children of the Ghetto*, 1892, etc. [illegible] ert Cannan (born in 1884; trans- [illegible] ad, 1910-13; *Round the Corner*, 1913; *Mendel*, 1916, etc.); E. M Forster (born in 1879 *Howard's End*, 1911, etc.); Walter Lionel George (born in 1882: *The Second Blooming*, 1914, etc.); D. H. Lawrence (born in 1887: *Sons and Lovers*, 1913, *The Rainbow*, 1915, etc.); Compton Mackenzie (born in 1883: *The Passionate Elopement*, 1911; *Carnival*, 1912; *Sinister Street*, vols. i and ii, 1913-14; continued in *The Early History* [illegible] *Michael*, 1919; *Guy and Pauline*, 1915; *P*[illegible] 'faugham (born in 1874: *Liza of Lambeth* [illegible] *blorer*, 1907; *Of Human Bondage*, 1915; *The Moon and* [illegible] *The Painted Veil*, 1925; *The Casuarina Tree*, 1926, [illegible] 1904; *The Three Sisters*, 1914; *Mary* [illegible] (born in 1884: *Nocturne*, 1917, etc.); Fr[illegible] *Sea*, 1914; *Black Diamonds*, 1922, etc.); I[illegible] *and Mr. Traill*, 1911; *Fortitude*, 1913 [illegible] *Dark Forest*, 1916; *The Green Mirror*, 1[illegible] 1922, etc).—James Joyce, up to 1914, [illegible] stories (born in 1882: *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, [illegible] etc.); he is a *post-war writer* (see study by H S. Gorman, 1926), like Clemence Dane (Winifred Ashton), *Legend*, 1920, etc.; Stephen MacKenna (*Sonia*, 1917, etc.); Dorothy Richardson (*Pointed Roofs*, 1916; *The Tunnel*, 1919; *Deadlock*, 1920, etc.); Virginia Woolf (*Night and Day*, 1920; *Jacob's Room*, 1923; *Mrs. Dalloway*, 1925; *To the Lighthouse*, 1927; *Orlando*, 1928, etc.). For a comprehensive study of this generation, see A. Chevalley, *Le Roman anglais de notre temps*, 1921.

One must confess that the progress thus realised in complexity and subtlety, is compensated for, as a rule, by a loss in clearness and concentration, which may be regretted even by other readers than those whose tastes have been shaped by the Latin tradition. The passing from the organic style of a Galsworthy to the systematic disorganisation of that of a Joyce is, on a slightly different plane, a consequence of the same cause. The fact that analogous schools or movements are meeting with success almost everywhere in Europe, would strengthen our impression that this *is a general development, linked up with the rhythm of the* international mind.

However, the novels of a John Davys Beresford, a Gilbert Cannan, a Frank Swinnerton, a David Herbert Lawrence, still testify to a persistent moral disquietude. In this respect, the generation of to-day more definitely continues that of yesterday. It remains, as viewed in far the greater number of interesting works, instinct with a mood of revolt against the existing order of ideas and of facts. Already in the years before the war it was evincing a tendency to pessimism. Its criticism of social values, in spite of a diffused humanitarianism, is more negative than substantial; it destroys established hierarchies much more than it sets up new ones. Its central endeavour seems to be a strong determination to be sincere, which will run the risk of being brutal *or cruel, provided it can thus be fruitful. So it is that the problem* of the relations between the sexes is treated, under all its aspects, with a candour which utterly nullifies the reserve of Victorian respectability. The desire for an acute, uncompromising analysis, able to seize upon all the interior secrets of the soul, is more and more conspicuous. The influence of Henry James had directed novelists towards the psychology of the relative; as Browning had done in his monologues, they sought to suppress themselves in their works, to show us the world exclusively through the eyes of their characters, and from the point of view of each. To-day this search for the implicit and the profound reaches the subconscious. Even though this word is not mentioned, and the Freudian theory is not explicitly appealed to, everything takes place in the works of many as if obscure desires, unsuspected impulses, were from their dark recesses guiding the clear notions, the wills and the acts of responsible beings.

These characteristics, however, are far from universal. To

the various classes of the reading public, according to temperaments, social degrees, and even ages, different styles will correspond. The contemporary novel, leaving out the writers who are anxious to open the way to the future, offers all the range of the more traditional or reassuring tones; and the sensational or detective novel, the novel of adventure, the novel of humour, the sentimental novel, the novel of fashionable life, still show proof of a vitality which at times rises to the level of distinction.

3. *The Theatre.*—The English theatre, after a long period of stagnation, was revived about the end of the nineteenth century by a series of converging initiatives, among which the leading one was the work of Bernard Shaw.[1] The craving for more dramatic situations, and for a more modern technique, made itself felt at that time with already mature writers, such as Pinero and Jones.[2] Their plays only testify to a vague desire for renovation, and rest satisfied with a compromise. The influence of Ibsen, which Edmund Gosse and Bernard Shaw[3] contributed to spread, more strongly directed the younger writers towards the philosophical and social drama; whilst the comedies of Oscar Wilde,[4] in a lighter vein, were a solitary example of the very brilliant revival of an old form.

Interpreted with ability by Gosse and Shaw, translated by William Archer,[5] and brought through the latter's articles to the knowledge of the many, the drama in the manner of Ibsen held undisputed sway for a score of years. It roused vivid interest, and pretty numerous imitations. The beginning, in 1904, of the lease of the "Court Theatre," by H. Granville Barker and Vedrenne is a landmark in the history of English literature. This playhouse was the centre of an active movement of progress and experiments, the benefit of which was felt both in the writing of plays conceived according to the new spirit, and in the renovation of stagecraft. The tendencies which thus came to the front were a regard for truth in stage setting and the style of players, a more

[1] See above, Book VII. chap. iv. sect. 4.

[2] Sir Arthur Pinero, born in 1855: *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, 1893; *The Gay Lord Quex*, 1899; *Mid-Channel*, 1909.—Henry Arthur Jones, born in 1851: *Breaking a Butterfly*, 1885; *Saints and Sinners*, 1891; *Mrs. Dane's Defence*, 1900, etc. *The Renaissance of the English Drama*, 1895.

[3] Edmund Gosse, *Studies in the Literatures of Northern Europe*, 1879; G. B. Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, 1891.

[4] See above, Book VII. chap. iii. sect. 5.

[5] Born in 1856; dramatic critic to the *World*, 1884-1905; published with H. Granville Barker, *A National Theatre, Scheme and Estimates*, 1907.

forcible representation of real life in plots and dialogues, and the selection of such themes as to put to the test the moral and social traditions through which the past still controls the present.

The vitality of the English theatre, from 1890 to 1914, is almost entirely to be found in the often resounding, but rarely popular, successes achieved by intense plays, written in the light of that ideal. The best dramas of William Somerset Maugham,[1] of St. John Hankin, of H. Granville Barker, are not unworthy of being studied along with those of Shaw; and the same influence can even be traced to some extent in such comedies as Arnold Bennett's and Gilbert Cannan's.

That relative concentration has not been lasting. At the present time, the main lines of the dramatic movement are less clearly marked. Already before 1914 the first symptoms of a change appeared in the success of provincial schools and local initiatives. The revival of the Irish theatre is the most remarkable of these signs;[2] and the "Abbey Theatre" of Dublin was in its turn an encouragement and model to the "Repertory Theatres" of Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham.

On the whole, the impulse given to the English drama by the renascence of the years 1890-1910 has not ceased to prove fruitful. Realism and naturalism are still the predominant inspirations of the more interesting writers; the problem plays are numerous yet, and social criticism remains in the foreground. But besides those tendencies, others have become apparent. Between the mediocrity of the conventional theatre, which has not lost the favour of the man in the street, and the harsh frankness of the "modern" play, the national temperament has sought, and found, compromises of various descriptions. One of these varieties is the comedy of sentiment, refreshed by a graceful imagination and by humour. The dramatic successes of Sir James Barrie point to the persistence, in the English public, of tastes which are too deep-rooted ever to disappear.[3] He has known

...t. 2): *Lady Frederick*, 1907; *The* ...*onstant Wife*, 1927, etc.—St. John ...*al*, 1905; *The Last of the De*... Granville Barker, born in 1877: ...old Bennett (see above, sect. 2): ...tc.—Gilbert Cannan (see above, ...

... 1903; *Peter Pan*, 1904; *A Kiss for Cinderella*, 1916; *Dear Brutus*, 1917, etc.

crowd. It is not possible yet to foresee whether those various efforts will succeed in really regenerating the English stage; but they bespeak, as in several other fields, a resolve to impose man's will upon nature, which is itself probably the sign of a natural energy, and for this very reason would justify much hopefulness.

In the drama, no less than in the novel, the most active influence to-day is that of the Russian example. The confessed indebtedness of some playwrights to the optics of the picture palace testifies, like the breaking up of construction and the discontinuous style with novelists, to a fatigue of logical attention, and also to the search for subtle new effects, through amorphous and spontaneous suggestions.[1]

4. *Poetry*.—The first years of the twentieth century seemed to show a decline in the vitality of English poetry. Swinburne and Meredith were approaching the end of their careers; Hardy and Kipling, still in the fullness of their vigour, belonged to the present, but not to the future. The symbolist and decadent movement was losing ground. John Davidson and Arthur Symons[2] had produced their best work. That of Francis Thompson was going to be prematurely cut short. While the reaction against the Victorian ideal was in full swing, and the younger men would show coldness or disrespect to the memory of Tennyson, no strong new inspiration was coming forth. The best known poets of the hour were seeking for models, either, like Austin and Blunt, in the forcible careless Romanticism of Byron; or, on the contrary, like Watts-Dunton, Gosse, Bridges, Watson, in a chastened purity of form, a delicate learned classicism, where the tradition of the preceding age mingled with the influence of the French "Parnasse." With both groups, the instinct of renovation was not inactive; poets were feeling their way, through unadorned simplicity or elaborate refinement; but their efforts were not backed by a sufficiently strong originality; and however just in various ways their intuitions might be, their art, even in its most facile or elegant achievements, suffered from a touch of uncertainty, or of the academic manner. There was in all this no fresh running spring.[3]

[1] For the connection of this tendency with German "expressionism," see Ashley Dukes, *The Youngest Drama*, 1923.

[2] See the study by T. Earle Welby, 1925.

[3] Alfred Austin (1835-1913), Poet Laureate on the death of Tennyson.—Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, born in 1840: *Poetical Works*, 1915.—Theodore Watts-Dunton (1836-

There was none either in artists at least as much inspired, but whose works, possibly owing to their very distinction, lacked all wide appeal: Housman, Trench, Doughty, Mrs. Woods. The first, in a single collection of meditated and finished pieces, has given a concentrated expression to a melancholy not unlike Hardy's; with the second, gifts of the first order have failed so far to awake a response in the instincts of the public; with Doughty, an epic imagination has spent itself in allegorical evocations too intellectual and austere, too full of the remembrance and the very language of the past, to get a genuine hold upon the present.[1]

On the contrary, the wide and popular success of Alfred Noyes, due to the clever handling of various resources, and to the energy of a facile eloquence, was not confirmed entirely by the judgment of the cultured few.[2]

About 1910 a generation of poets appeared. They had that abundance, and that sureness, which reveal fertile temperaments; and, in spite of their differences, or even oppositions, they bore a family likeness. Very soon, they forced the attention of the public. As early as 1912, an impression got abroad that a lyrical spring was begun; one spoke of the "Georgian" revival of poetry; and this epithet sounded like a challenge to the long reign which had also given its name to a poetical age.

These poets form a group, but in no wise a school. They do not care to profess a doctrine. They create, and follow the bent of their natures. Their notion of poetry is in their work. When probed, this reveals two main tendencies, both not new. Some look for beauty to a purification of experience, reached through imagination or culture; they like to forget the present, and their conscious care of form draws them, in many respects, towards the ideal of a classical and refined inspiration. The others, much

[illegible] 1897.—Edmund Gosse, born in 1849, eminent critic,

1926, explorer and poet: *Travels in Arabia* [illegible] 1906-7; see study by B. Fairley, 1927.—Margaret Louise Woods, born in 1856: *Collected Poems*, 1913.

[2] Alfred Noyes, born in 1880: *Collected Poems*, 1910 and 1920.

more numerous, soothe the strain and uneasiness which the excessive search for elaborate perfection, and the attempts of artificial idealism, had laid deep in their sensibilities, by means of a vehement effort towards a direct simple utterance. They look to familiar, concrete subjects, and to spontaneous language and prosody, for the virtue of those immediate effusions in which literature at periodic intervals tries to refresh itself.

The whole endeavour of this group thus shows, in theory, no distinctly original feature. Their æsthetic aims remind one of those of the preceding period; or more often, beyond the concentrated discipline of the Victorian age, they fall back upon the liberating example of Blake and Wordsworth. In this deeper sense, they really continue the new Romanticism, the principle of which they but more broadly put into practice. They, too, attempt to remedy the stiffening of an art grown mechanical, by means of the loosing of the soul's set habits; they, too, want to recover the virgin freshness of the sense of reality, and load the most spontaneous language with a spiritual force, which exceeds the explicit strength of intense words. Once more, we thus have here one of those "returns to nature" which betoken a resolve to reach a more intact plane of the inner life. However, these writers are distinguished by characteristics which are their own, being derived from the necessarily unique temper of their age. Their aspiration to reality is more courageous, bolder or more violent; their humanitarian feeling is strengthened by the progress of social consciousness. They carry within themselves the memory of the century of artistic life which has elapsed since Wordsworth's time. And while they practise the same gospel, they have an intuition of the commonplace which threatens them in this direction as well. More definitely warned by the experience of the intervening years, their effort is more uncompromising; they exceed the degree of simplicity, of naturalness, of direct realism, where Wordsworth had stopped; they equal the audacity of Blake, who had proceeded, at one stroke, as far as the future was to proceed; but they are free from his mystic terrors, and their inspiration, less divinely puerile, enjoys a more supple and careless youth.

The faith with which these poets are instinct is thus not without precedents; but actual practice is all in art; and the genuine-

ness of their gifts lends the quality of an initiative to their work. On the eve of the war, their group had risen in stature, and they were beginning to fulfill their promise. They went through the storm of the war, in which one of them lost his life; and their generation has since reached its final growth. It thus appears that they can lay claim to a high order of merit, but that none belongs to the class of masters who dominate a literary age.

The reason is not that they lack talent. T. Sturge Moore, Lascelles Abercrombie, James Elroy Flecker, who have affinities with classical inspiration, and with whom one might join Lady Margaret Sackville, or the writers of plays in verse like Binyon and Drinkwater,[1] have honourably carried on a great tradition. The first unites the sober elegance of antique art with a wholly modern intellectuality; the second in his philosophical poetry has an austere but high nobleness. Among freer temperaments, attracted in various ways by the appeals of concrete life, and desirous before all of expressing themselves sincerely, we meet with a wide range of individualities. Rupert Brooke, already departed and secure of fame, owes a more entire and a broader affinity with the instincts of his race to the many-sidedness of his nature, and to his position, between university culture which permeated him on the one hand, and on the other the independent curiosities of young England which he shared. The British heart has accepted him for its own; the fine seriousness of his last poems, inspired by the war, has that note of absolute spontaneousness which had been at times lacking in the happy fancies of his verve. This note William Henry Davies has struck from the first; his genuine experience, his intimate prolonged contact with the misery of life and the intoxication of the open road to the unknown, impart an accent of penetrating truth to his delicate naturalism. He possesses without effort that fresh simplicity after which others will strive in vain; and his imaginative lyricism glorifies vulgar things with a tender glamour.

Walter de la Mare is the poet of dim suggestions, of fugitive [illegible] of a child, and communicates the [illegible] The method of his art is that of the younger Blake, and of Coleridge; but he is a contemporary

[1] See above, sect. 3. *Selected Poems*, by J. D., 1922.

of Maeterlinck, and his subtle symbolism has the mellowness made possible by a long habit of the mind. It is to symbols, as well, that Wilfrid Wilson Gibson is naturally drawn; he finds them in the crudest scenes of the life of the poor, from which pity strikes out a gleam of brotherly humanity; his social inspiration has shaped for itself an adequate instrument, a popular language, a faithful adherence to the tone of conversation, which goes beyond Wordsworth, and a free verse, voluntarily shorn of all regular measure. When he returns to rhyme, he reaches a more poetical and rare suggestiveness, without losing the realistic flavour of his utterance. David Herbert Lawrence, the most harshly vigorous of those writers, in verse as in prose, has turned symbolism to new uses in producing effects of concentrated passion; he has loaded reassuring familiar words with a sensuous ardour which wells up like an obscure flow of lava from what they tell and from what they leave unsaid.

John Masefield, who more than them all has the gift of facile energy, is probably the central figure of this group. His verbal inventiveness is abundant and racy; the movement, the sweep of his verse at first arrest the reader, create the impression of a manner less original, more largely reminiscent of Romantic eloquence; but his nerve, his power of concrete imagining, his broad virile sense of frank realities, belong indeed to his own time; and his joy in words is tempered by a secret sense of dissatisfaction with the hindrance which language places in the way of expression. He feels with Kipling the intoxication of physical effort and of the sea; with Whitman, that of simple fraternities; and still, he shows a power of intellectual concentration and of meditative harmonics. The animation of his work, lyrical, dramatic or narrative, the variety of his rhythms, the ease and direct vigour of his style, would secure him what his competitors lack, greatness, if he had done more than try his hand at various kinds, without fully realising himself in any. Lastly, Harold Monro, whose inspiration is not free either from literary reminscences, has also a personal temperament; he strikes fine, airy chords, in which quiver the pensive sensibilities of our time; the remembrance of Shelley's poignant melodies, of Keats's sumptuousness, lingers in his lines; but the quality as of old age, which this memory assumes from the intervening century of intense life, mingles with an acutely conscious youth, that of a soul eagerly

bent on drawing fresh stimulation from the springs of elementary experience.[1]

Charm, gracefulness, even strength, and the elements of a distinguished originality; such gifts have been granted to contemporary poets in exceptional profusion. However, it is not certain but that the many collections in which poems, as soon as published, are gathered to last, may contain almost entirely perishable matter. One looks in vain through them for an artistic form both new and fruitful, and for the sure marks of an undoubted master; or if these are to be seen, only the future will be able to know them.

The war poets are outside the limits of this study. Several of them are pathetic figures, having died in the struggle, leaving behind them the proof of precocious talents, and of an early painful maturity; others have survived, stamped for life by the ordeal. Their generation was no less promising than that of their elders. Their lyricism has the same characteristics With them too the distinguishing note is spontaneity, and a frankness which seems to be attacking deceitful appearances through all conventions; their realism is tempered with humour and tenderness; their love of life clings with desperate fondness to the serene aspects of nature; their patriotism cherishes the familiar images of the earth; their social and human pity combines itself with a

[1] Thomas Sturge Moore, born in 1870, critic and poet: *Art and Life*, 1910; *The Sicilian Idyll*, etc., 1911; *Danae*, etc., 1920.—Lascelles Abercrombie, born in 1881, poet and critic: *Interludes and Poems*, 1908; *Deborah*, 1913, etc.—James Elroy [illegible] by D. Goldring, 1922.— [illegible] *Dramatic Poems*, 1911; [illegible]; *Collected Poems*, 1918. [illegible] *Super-Tramp* (prose), [illegible] 1873. *Songs of Child-* [illegible] *Poems*, 1912; *Motley and Other* [illegible].—Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, born [illegible] —David Herbert Lawrence (see [illegible] *mores*, 1916, *New Poems*, 1918, etc.—John Masefield, born in 1878 *Collected Poems and Plays*, 1919; *Collected Poems*, 1923; see study by W H. Hamilton, 1922; by C. Biggane, 1924.—Harold Monro, born in 1879, poet and critic· *Before Dawn*, 1911, *Trees*, 1915; *Strange Meetings*, 1917, etc. For all this movement see the collections of verse: *Georgian Poetry*, 1911-12, 1913-15, 1916-17, 1918-19, 4 vols, 1913-20); *New Numbers*, 1914; J. C. Squire, *Selections from Modern Poets*, 2 vols., 1919-24; M. C. Sturgeon, *Studies of Contemporary Poets*, 1916; M Wilkinson, *New Voices*, 1920, etc. These writers, on the whole, do not renew the prosodic form, already so supple, of English verse. They give more amplitude to a liberty of rhythmical construction which the genius of the language calls for, or tolerates without effort; but the "free verse," properly speaking, in no way related to any perceptible periodicity, remains an exception with them

revolt against the cruelty of their experience, with a great love and a great hope, both insecure. Few are the utterances in which the struggle, the immediate emotions of heroism and energy, receive unreserved expression, and are self-sufficient. Fewer still are the words of hatred. The main themes are resignation, suffering, bitterness, and the impassioned return of the soul to dear memories.[1] This spirit of moral rebellion seems to predominate still with the young poets of the post-war days.

The last movement that it is possible to perceive—a purely literary one this time—is imagism. Contrary to the preceding ones, it has a definite doctrine. It is related to tendencies now active in other domains—the novel, the stage [2]—and in other countries: America, France, for example. Its principle is to push the search for spontaneousness and immediacy up to the point where the obtrusion of interpreting and constructive thought has not yet succeeded in making itself felt. The materials of art will thus be the rough data of mental life—"images," or complex and instantaneous bundles of intellectual and emotional perceptions. To present them without deforming them, with their untouched freshness and vigour, is to offer the most direct and most certainly efficacious suggestions to the mind of the reader. The actual impact of reality is thus transmitted to us, with such force that the tyranny of practical life is vanquished, and for a moment we escape its demands. A writer, the imagists believe, should avoid all abstraction, and every architectural attempt; so he must be very sparing in his use of language, restricting his notations to indispensable elements; and he must grant measures and cadences of all sorts their full value—not secondary, but essential—in the elaboration of the total effect.[3]

Whatever the future of this method may be, it obviously con-

[1] Besides Rupert Brooke (see above), mention may be made of Robert Graves, born in 1895: *Fairies and Fusiliers*, 1917.—Robert Nichols, born in 1893: *Ardours and Endurances*, 1917.—Siegfried Sassoon, born in 1886: *War Poems*, 1919.—Charles Hamilton Sorley, born in 1895, killed in action, 1915: *Marlborough and Other Poems*, 1916. See for these poets the *Treasury of War Poetry, British and American*, 1917-19.

[2] See above, sects. 2 and 3.

[3] For this movement, see the works of Richard Aldington, born in 1892: *Images Old and New*, 1915; *Images of War*, 1919; *Images of Desire*, 1920, etc.—Mrs. Aldington: *Garden*, 1916, etc.—F. S. Flint: *Cadences*, 1915, etc.—Aldous Huxley: *The Defeat of Youth*, etc., 1918; *Leda*, 1920, etc.—Collections of verse: *The Imagists*, 1914; *Some Imagist Poets*, 1915, 1916, 1917; the review, *The Egoist*, 1914, etc. For a sort of literary cubism, see the collections entitled *Wheels* (1916, 1917, 1918, etc.), and the work of E., O. and S. Sitwell (see R. L. Mégroz, *The Three Sitwells*, 1927).

stitutes one more expression of the needs which are producing at the same time a discontinuous style, a return to elementary values, in various kinds of literature, and of picturesque or musical arts; needs which are shared in equally by the refined or jaded sensibilities of old nations, and by young America.[1] English imagism is a sign, at the same time, of the decomposition and analysis towards which, on many planes, the instincts of æsthetic renovation seem to converge; and of the gradual rise of an international artistic movement, no longer simply through contagious influences and fashions, but under the stress of an interior development.[2]

5. *The Possibilities of the Future.*—If the succession of ages, in the history of English literature, offers a marked periodicity, is it possible to foresee in any measure the further working of this rhythm?—What seem to be, at this uncertain obscure hour, the possibilities of the future?

The last recognisable period is that which, beginning about 1875-1880, has reinstated the freedom of divergent instincts in literature and in thought. This new Romanticism would, if the alternation of phases were to continue, call for the advent of an age with classical tendencies, organised round a new search for balance, the controlling principle of which would be furnished by intelligence.

A movement of this kind has tentatively appeared in France during the last fifteen years. It would be according to precedents, and to the respective characteristics of the two nations, that English literature should be slightly late relatively to that of France. It is true, England's psychological development has

[1] See the work of Ezra Pound, etc.

[2] [illegible] a passing remark. It has [illegible] a Saintsbury than in the [illegible] we have mentioned above; [illegible] in 1922); the searching analyses of a Lytton Strachey (see below). Learned professors, such as W. P. Ker (died in 1923); or writers more in touch with actuality, judges at once of books and of religious or moral life, as recently Stopford A. Brooke, or yesterday A. Clutton-Brock; or novelist, poet and critic in turn, as Sir A. Quiller-Couch; or again, devoting themselves both to interpretation and to original creation, as Arthur Symons and J. C. Squire—English critics, in a general way, have continued the tradition of Coleridge and Hazlitt. Their ideal is not that of methodical rigour, but of intuition that has been *kindled into life by the deep contact of personalities.* They have raised literary appreciation to the status of an art which tends to re-create, under a clearer form, the human characteristics of their subjects; theirs is an impressionism strengthened by a very sure and constant sense of moral qualities and which, far from excluding knowledge, seeks rather, of set purpose, to fertilise it.

assumed a quicker rate of progress; while spiritual exchanges between countries are on the increase, and there is a further growth of some international influences whose trend would be to equalise the courses of the various national evolutions; yet, in spite of all, England is still slower in the initiatives of the mind, especially when the reactions that are preparing bring on a properly intellectual phase.

Some symptoms might support the conjecture that a transition were begun, carrying the British mind towards a period similar to what is, in France, the rational neo-classicism, which tends to come forward through the confusion of schools and groups. Such signs are: the persistence in a very active state, among all the varieties of contemporary poetry, of an inspiration not indeed academic, but classical, through the stressing of ancient values, and through the condensation and elaboration of form; next, the place still held, in the universal disorder of minds, by the desire for a moral and social balance founded on a more scientific organisation of life, and that effort of intelligence, which is still a leading trait of young England; the coming back in strength of philosophical rationalism, in a tempered and more supple form it is true, with the "neo-realists" (see above, VII. ii. 1); the success of critical works instinct with a purpose of uncompromising lucidity, like those of Lytton Strachey,[1] T. S. Eliot,[2] etc.; the revival of a genuine interest in the literature and thought of the Restoration and the eighteenth century; lastly, the characteristics of some significant writers, among the novelists and poets of to-day—a James Joyce, a Virginia Woolf, a Dorothy Richardson, a Rose Macaulay (*Potterism*, 1920; *Dangerous Ages*, 1921, etc.), a Katherine Mansfield,[3] a Rebecca West, an Edward Morgan Forster, a Richard Aldington, an F. S. Flint, an Aldous Huxley; the converence of "imagism," with an ironical and rather dry criticism, and with impressionist discontinuity in the presentment of things. But this last symptom, probably the most interesting, is complex, and gives rise to a problem.

Are imagism, and such a style as James Joyce's, in themselves the signs of an intellectual, or of an emotional tendency? On

[1] *Eminent Victorians; Queen Victoria; Books and Characters*, etc.
[2] *The Sacred Wood*, etc.
[3] The work of this exquisite writer (1890-1923) was cut short by premature death: *The Garden Party*, 1922; *Bliss*, 1923; *The Dove's Nest*, 1924, etc. See her *Diary*, published by J. Middleton Murry, 1927.

the plane of literary and psychological correspondence, do they belong to the province of classicism, or to that of Romanticism?

At first sight, they are unequivocally the heirs of Neo-Romanticism, the principle of which they seem to extend so far as to exhaust it; so they could not be claimed as the signs of a contrary phase. They complete the break-up, no longer unconscious, but voluntary, of all logical bonds; they achieve the victory of immediate discontinuity over all thought-out construction, and thus of feeling over reason; they appeal to the new psychology, which has laid stress again on the rough data of perception, at the expense of the diagrams worked out by intelligence. Their deeper roots are in that evolution of art and thought which for the last quarter of a century has accompanied the revival of Romanticism, and in all the activities of the mind has destroyed the artificial static schemes which a premature rationalism had enforced.

But when closely studied, the attempts of the more original among younger writers reveal a strong and, it even seems, a predominant intellectuality. The "images" which they work upon are, according to their own descriptions, bundles in which the various elements of the inner life have not yet been dissociated; sensation and emotion are thus largely represented in them, but intelligence is not excluded either. What matters more, a method which sets forth those data in their concrete truth, without linking them up together, thereby will have nothing to do with the impulses of passion and emotion; for sentiment, in its own way, is an organising force; it tends to unify consciousness, and thus to stamp an order upon it, quite as imperiously as reason, though in a different way. To avoid constructing in any manner life or an artistic work, is to leave open to one's self only one attitude, a self-repressing objectivity. In fact, discontinuous literature is intellectual, and often cold. It appeals to the reader's collaboration, demanding from him a very intense effort of combination and mental synthesis; therefore, the faculties which it calls into play are primarily constructive. Through an indirect course, it thus eventually falls back upon the purposes of classicism, because the latter's psychological needs are to a large extent its own.

A literature of the kind here described would then in actual fact be a mixed one; and this is indeed the conclusion which could have been expected, as soon as we took into account the gradual mingling of characteristics, and the interpenetration of periods.

assumed a quicker rate of progress; while spiritual exchanges between countries are on the increase, and there is a further growth of some international influences whose trend would be to equalise the courses of the various national evolutions; yet, in spite of all, England is still slower in the initiatives of the mind, especially when the reactions that are preparing bring on a properly intellectual phase.

Some symptoms might support the conjecture that a transition were begun, carrying the British mind towards a period similar to what is, in France, the rational neo-classicism, which tends to come forward through the confusion of schools and groups. Such signs are: the persistence in a very active state, among all the varieties of contemporary poetry, of an inspiration not indeed academic, but classical, through the stressing of ancient values, and through the condensation and elaboration of form; next, the place still held, in the universal disorder of minds, by the desire for a moral and social balance founded on a more scientific organisation of life, and that effort of intelligence, which is still a leading trait of young England; the coming back in strength of philosophical rationalism, in a tempered and more supple form it is true, with the "neo-realists" (see above, VII. ii. 1); the success of critical works instinct with a purpose of uncompromising lucidity, like those of Lytton Strachey,[1] T. S. Eliot,[2] etc.; the revival of a genuine interest in the literature and thought of the Restoration and the eighteenth century; lastly, the characteristics of some significant writers, among the novelists and poets of to-day—a James Joyce, a Virginia Woolf, a Dorothy Richardson, a Rose Macaulay (*Potterism*, 1920; *Dangerous Ages*, 1921, etc.), a Katherine Mansfield,[3] a Rebecca West, an Edward Morgan Forster, a Richard Aldington, an F. S. Flint, an Aldous Huxley; the converence of "imagism," with an ironical and rather dry criticism, and with impressionist discontinuity in the presentment of things. But this last symptom, probably the most interesting, is complex, and gives rise to a problem.

Are imagism, and such a style as James Joyce's, in themselves the signs of an intellectual, or of an emotional tendency? On

[1] *Eminent Victorians; Queen Victoria; Books and Characters*, etc.
[2] *The Sacred Wood*, etc.
[3] The work of this exquisite writer (1890-1923) was cut short by premature death: *The Garden Party*, 1922; *Bliss*, 1923; *The Dove's Nest*, 1924, etc. See her *Diary*, published by J. Middleton Murry, 1927.

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The intermittent flashes of "imagism" and of the various recent forms of impressionism, whose secret inner principle seems to be the interrupted rhythm of moving pictures, would just betoken the application of intellectuality to a background of instincts saturated with a now chronic Romanticism. It would be the neo-classicism of a pragmatist age, incapable of charming away, so as to give itself up to constructive reason, the spells of the concrete and the intuitive, with which the Romantic revelation has enriched the modern sense of things. That paradoxical complexity would thus, more clearly than ever, point to the mingling of tendencies, to their being hoarded up in consciousness into so complete a treasure, and so heavy a burden, that the birth of an untainted literary period, and the unsophisticated joy of an absolute artistic renovation, would cease to be possible. The very working of the psychological rhythm, and its continued fecundity, would thus be endangered. It would follow thence that the confusion of principles, efforts and methods in which our age is entangled, was an unavoidable consequence of the thorough saturation of minds. The immediate future of English literature would be conditioned before all by that exhaustion of its untouched resources. The neo-classicism which seems to be preparing in England would be contaminated in its very fountainhead by the intimate fusion of Romantic streams, just as in France the neo-classicism which has defined itself and is gaining the ascendancy proves unable to eliminate the virus which flows in spite of itself through its veins. Romanticism henceforward would be incurable, and would triumph in the very victories that were won over it.

But complexity offers art a resource, while it is a foe to genuine renovations, and to unadulterated fresh feelings. The relative stagnancy of the rhythm, which has probably become a permanent trait of English literature, would not prevent the latter from producing still for a long time precious fruits, the more rich in taste as they had been permeated and coloured by more various juices.

And should the secret vitality of this literature be in a way undermined, it would be enough, to render it its full vigour, that it should receive a substantial influx of fresh energy. In several modes, such an influx seems to be at present preparing. The life instinct might be at work, and germs be silently awaking, in the pessimism of these anxious years.

A first mode would be that of social changes deep enough to rejuvenate in a large measure the instincts from which the national culture draws its sustenance. The lower classes dimly partake in the intellectual evolution of society, and so in the intermixture of tendencies; however, they remain the reservoir of virgin sensibilities and intact forces. English literature, like the French, mostly lives by the inflow of sap from the people. Recent influences—the much wider spread of teaching, the freer access of the many to knowledge, the social rehabilitation of the schoolmaster—are extending the field in which an elementary education allows latent gifts to grow conscious, without exhausting them in advance. The number of the writers who are sons of the people is notably on the increase; there is being created an intellectual proletariat, in which are more broadly merging the modest representatives of the professional class, along with erratic units from the various trades and from life. Moreover, the great advance of the workmen in political experience and moral maturity is adding numerous and robust elements to that reserve stock of temperaments less weakened vitally, in which talent may grow. The prospect of a rapid development of English democracy towards an economic structure, and the possibility of a society in which work would be the controlling principle of organisation, vaguely open the perspective of a literature no doubt less refined, but to a large extent cured of the illness of its opulent old age. The "People's Theatre," the "pageants," the works of such writers as William Henry Davies or David Herbert Lawrence, as also those of Carpenter, in various ways lend some plausibility to this conjecture.

On the other hand, changes may be introduced into the collective mind of the British people from the outside; or rather, this mind may be modified by its contact with forces which, acting from the external world, efficiently stimulate its latent powers. To this order belong, first, foreign influences. On the whole, the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and the first quarter of the twentieth, have been in England a period of increased receptivity, in which the country's inner divergences have allowed it to feel wider sympathies, and to assimilate more freely. The radiating example of France chiefly, then of Scandinavia, of Russia, has given a definite aim to many confused artistic impulses, from the first relaxing of Victorian discipline, to the time of the war. At the present day, the English mind is not

impervious to influences; but it does not feel any single one with abnormal intensity; in its disquietude it does not seem to find in any a stimulus sufficient to polarise its scattered energies, and to create a decisive magnetism. Or rather, if it can at all receive such an impulse, it is not from the literature and thought of this or that people, but from the powerful and manifold suggestion of the whole human world.

A limitless contact with the variety of the earth and of races, and the internationalism of imagination, seem to be at the present time the main ways through which the imperious need of a psychological renewal is seeking satisfaction in England. The Empire naturally offers this need already substantial gratifications. It is not only that transplanted shoots from the stock of the English people have recovered, in a different soil, all the primitive freshness of the old sap; that sturdy nations, and original literatures, are growing in South Africa, in Canada, in Australia, in New Zealand; so that the future of British letters might be even now discovered in the Dominions, where it is assuming an actual reality. Whatever may be in the time to come the spiritual relationship of the daughter nations to the mother country, the youth of the former is not an absolute anodyne to the anxious maturity of the latter. Besides, the moral unity of the Dominions consists before all, to-day, in their common connection with the centre from which their intellectual civilisation sprang. Should ever this connection be broken through the extinction of the original focus, there would still be British literatures, scattered all through the world: there would no longer be any English literature.

But nothing points to the extinction of that focus: and one of the ways in which its vitality is maintained, is just that it is beginning to strengthen its rays with those of the distant fires which it has itself lighted. The literary exploitation of the Empire is the most superficial aspect of this fusion. The British colonies are offering themes to English writers: an exoticism of the Empire is developing: but the colonies are as well giving writers to England. Kipling is the most illustrious representative of a group whose number is growing. The exchanges of subjects, of influences, and of human capital between the Dominions and the mother country, are still very active: and the latter receives to-day no less than she gives.

However vast the Empire may be, the psychological equi-

impervious to influences; but it does not feel any single one with abnormal intensity; in its disquietude it does not seem to find in any a stimulus sufficient to polarise its scattered energies, and to create a decisive magnetism. Or rather, if it can at all receive such an impulse, it is not from the literature and thought of this or that people, but from the powerful and manifold suggestion of the whole human world.

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sion of England is not confined to it. All the oceans are included within the moral domain of the curiosity, the initiative and the energy of a people of sailors and merchants. The literature of the sea is properly English, and Joseph Conrad has dedicated his talent in homage to his adoptive fatherland. The salt waves are the baptism in which is tempered afresh the healthy instinct which obscurely guides the British genius. But the continents, no less than the oceans, are overrun, studied, absorbed. Explorers, travellers, adventurers, tourists of all kinds, drink in the living images of the originality of all climates, all horizons, all manners. This invasion of the earth by the assimilative spirit of a people is no new development, and other contemporary civilisations show the same tendencies to various degrees. Still, the cosmopolitanism of taste and interest is in the literature and art of England more accentuated than it was ever before, and more active than with any other people.

There is not left any no man's land to colonise; the Empire has probably found its limits; the hopes of missionaries are restricted to narrow bounds; trade meets with the competition of rival nations, and of the Dominions themselves. But the painter, the novelist, the poet, the philosopher, roam through the world, live the life of the peoples, settle among them, drink in the charm, the atmosphere, the colour, the moral suggestions of the soil, the sky and the men. Never before have the wandering intellectuals, rich or poor, sometimes living by the labour of their hands, tramps of roads, of cities and of harbours, who leave England, to come back some day or never, and mingle with their work the flavour of foreign countries, been more numerous. A majority of the younger generation of English writers are rootless, or mobile. Whether or not these experiences result in diaries of travel, descriptions, studies of manners, in an exotic range of images, there enter from them into the very tissue of thoughts a sense of the vastness and diversity of the world, a knowledge of the varied beauty spread over the earth, and of the unexpected rights which the strangest civilisations may have to live. Knowledge is the beginning of respect and of sympathy Even such a professed apostle of imperialism as Rudyard Kipling owes to the immensity of his horizon a suppleness of imagination which subtly tempers the voluntary narrowness of his gospel. The sometimes haughty or hard policy of British colonisation towards the subjected peoples is thus counteracted by an inner effort of

justice and charity, which in the long run softens both intentions and acts.[1]

The United States of America are related with that expansion in a manner which, though essential, is difficult to define. American literature, long emancipated, is seeking its own paths; the jealous independence of a great nation is freeing itself and more from the rhythms of the older culture. The

remained so far bound up with the complex psychological organisation which a national mind represents, and chiefly with that perfect, intimately possessed instrument of expression, a mother tongue. How far could the internationality of subjects, suggestions and themes permeate the creative activities of a group of writers, unless these had severed the links which tie them to the exclusive particularity of one spirit and one language?

If the instinctive impulse which scatters through the world a large number of the English writers already notable, or destined to be, and widely opens the attention of the British people to foreign things, is only derived from the mere will to live; if that exploration of the earth is an attenuated, indirect, and as it were repressed form of political or commercial annexation, there could not be in the process any fruitful psychological initiative, either for one people or for mankind. The rival cultures will follow English culture in that field; they have already followed it there; indeed, they had preceded it. The diffusion of French literature, for one, is of older standing; it acts more largely, again, through its intrinsic merits, and is less kept to the ways laid out by colonisation and commerce. This diffusion, it is true, is different. French literature gives itself, rather than it assimilates, and feeds on what it touches. The French mind, though more homogeneous and organised, has opened itself of the last two centuries to many influences; it is, however, less attentively, less widely in contact with the realities and the problems of the world.

The cosmopolitan curiosity of England is still bound by its origins with the traditions of British imperialism; it continues certain habits, certain acts, which are part and parcel of those traditions; it is so to say a reflex expression of them. As such, it gives vent to a national egoism, and clashes with other egoisms. A conflict of this kind has been till now a characteristic, if not a condition, of the life of peoples; for this very reason, it seems impossible to perceive in it an instinct of moral renovation at work.

But the intellectual activities are those in which is concentrated the idealism which springs, with slow gradual effort, from the practical decisions of human groups. There is a germ of disinterestedness in that form of English expansion. It is akin to the sincere humanitarianism of enlightened opinion, to the

desire for a more equitable justice among peoples; it is closely related to the sympathy which welcomes the half-realised hope of a league of nations. In the intercourse between the mother country and the Dominions, it has brought about the relaxing of political bonds, and the development of the Empire towards a liberal commonwealth. It seems as if by trying to make itself as broad as the earth, as varied as the races and civilisations of men, the English genius were obscurely attempting to create in itself that all-embracing unity, which the movement of thought and desire, and the pressure of material necessities, agree in pointing out as the goal of the human march onward.

On this higher plane, the conflict of a culture with the others is no longer fatal. Bound as it is with one language, that is to say still with a national particularism, and excluding every rival in its own domain, English literature could only gain an encroaching ubiquity by obstructing spiritual originalities at least equal to its own. Its best and finest intuitions raise it above such an undertaking. The universality which it seems to seek is that of knowledge, of acceptance, and does not exclude parallel universalities of the same kind. Wholly ideal, the possession which it claims clashes with no sovereignty, either of the body or of the mind. What seems to dawn in this instinctive effort, is the dim sense of the reconciliation which the future will perhaps realise between nationalities, limited and mutually exclusive psychological organisms, and the internationalism of the commonalty of man.

It is difficult to conjecture whether such an initiative might open the way to a fruitful renewing of intellectual life. It is only possible to believe that by shaping its course in the direction which civilisation, it seems, tends to follow, the English genius shows a vitality still supple, and capable of adaptations. If literary and artistic forms can bear without disruption the changes wrought by that much wider mental outlook and nurture, it may be expected that a new cycle of thought and art could result from it. For thus to increase the range of one's personality is not to denounce it. The national quality of a mind, of a literature, is not lost in that effort to embrace, without selfishly absorbing them, the material and moral realities which the universe demands that we tolerate. On the contrary, it seems as if the gradual ripening of modern English thought had allowed it to

realise itself better and more fully; as if the original nationality of England had gained thus in many-sidedness and in depth. The complexity which is now created by the inevitable mingling of tendencies is, no doubt, here as elsewhere, the means of a more penetrating reflection, of a superior and perhaps unexceptionable intellectualism, whose supple working tends to resemble the intuitive play of consciousness, so thoroughly as to be indistinguishable from it.

However this may be, the most noble virtue, and the strongest appeal, of English literature at the present day, reside in its *social generosity; in its self-criticism, freed from the shackles by* which it had not long ago accepted to be bound; in the human sympathy which counteracts the force—it once was the harshness—of its character, and the insularity of its horizons. The secular treasure of beauty which it preserves and ever increases owes to that inner progress of the British soul a softer and a more winning radiance.[1]

To be consulted: J. Agate, *The Contemporary Theatre*, 1925; F. W. Chandler, *Aspects of Modern Drama*, 1916; A. Chevalley, *Le Roman anglais de notre temps*, 1921; J. W. Cunliffe, *English Literature During the Last Half-Century*, 1920; idem, *Modern English Playwrights*, 1927; B. Fehr, *Die englische Literatur des 19 und 20 Jahrhunderts*, 1923; H. T and W. Follett, *Some Modern Novelists*, 1918; W. L. George, *A Novelist on Novels*, 1918; M. S. Jameson, *Modern Drama in Europe*, 1920; R. Brimley Johnson, *Some Contemporary Novelists (Women)*, 1920, idem (*Men*), 1922; R. Lalou, *Panorama de la Littérature Anglaise Contemporaine*, 1927. J. M. Manly and E. Rickert, *Contemporary British Literature*, 1922; H Monro, *Some Contemporary Poets*, 1920; A. E. Morgan, *Tendencies of Modern English Drama*, 1924; E. Muir, *Transition*, 1926; Sir H. Newbolt, *A New Study of English Poetry*, 1917; W. M. Parker, *Modern Scottish Writers*, 1917; W. L. Phelps, *The Advance of English Poetry in the Twentieth Century*, 1918; idem, *The Twentieth Century Theatre*, 1919; annual reviews of English poetry, dramas and novels in the *Revue Germanique*, 1910-14, 1920-23, M. C. Sturgeon, *Studies of Contemporary Poets*, 1916; F. Vernon, *The Twentieth Century Theatre*, 1924; M. O. Wilkinson, *New Voices*, 1919; H. Williams, *Modern English Writers*, 1920.

[1] An aspect of the literary individualism described above (chap. v sect. 1) is the revival of the essay, which since R. L. Stevenson has returned to its former tradition, and freed itself from the somewhat impersonal dignity in which the influence of the leading reviews had confined it in the period 1830-70 At the present day it is an unfettered, *infinitely supple expression of the most various* temperaments. Many of the novelists, poets, critics, etc., of the contemporary age would deserve a special mention as essay-writers. To the already quoted names [illegible] H Belloc A. Clutton-Brock, R. Le Gallienne, Mrs Meynell, etc, [illegible] ving or the recently departed, those of [illegible] ames Frazer (*Sir Roger de Coverley*, [illegible], Andrew Lang, Vernon Lee (Violet [illegible] G. S Street, etc. See *Modern English* [illegible] *English Essays*, by H Milford, 1925

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